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MITHRAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
C. F. CLAY, MANAGER
LONDON : FETTER LANE, E.C. 4

NEW YORK : THE MACMILLAN CO.
BOMBAY
CALCUTTA } MACMILLAN AND CO., LTD.
MADRAS
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MITHRAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

A STUDY IN COMPARATIVE RELIGION

BY

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CAMBRIDGE
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS
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TO

MY FATHER

PREFACE

THE science of comparative religion has made gigantic strides in the last two centuries. Not only have the sacred books of Persia, India, and China been discovered, and presented to the general reader in careful and accurate translations, but the records of missionaries and anthropologists have been compiled and collated by diligent and erudite scholars. The material for investigation is abundant, and may increase even more: but the interpretation of the facts varies largely according to the standpoint of the individual enquirers.

There are, in the main, three points of view from which historic religions may be studied and compared. First there is the plagiaristic view. According to some scholars, there is a reasonable presumption that most religions have borrowed names and ideas from older faiths, and this process goes back to the earliest cults. Similarities between different religions are explained by the supposition that the later borrows from the earlier. This theory, if pushed to extremes, would deprive all but the primitive cults of any claim to originality. It may be frankly admitted that one religion exerts an influence upon another, but each possesses, in all essentials, its own vitality and independence. Those who are inclined to adopt the plagiaristic view should take to heart the warning of Prof. Otto Pfleiderer:

> Before all things we must guard against the constant practice of imagining that the inward affinity of religious conceptions implies a connection in their external history....

Affinity of conceptions is not necessarily explained by borrowing and transmission from one sphere to another; but from the same psychological causes, and with like social conditions, conceptions similar in character may arise in different places quite spontaneously and independently of one another, and indeed have so arisen in numberless instances[1].

Let us then consider the second view, which is the psychological. Psychology is the study of human ideas, volitions, and emotions, and therefore can be applied to religion as well as to any other sphere of human thought. Certain religious thoughts, acts, and feelings can be observed by the psychologist in every individual, and in the human race as a whole. Most men believe in good or bad spirits; they desire to pray and worship; they are moved by feelings of love or fear, sorrow or joy. The minds of men think alike to some extent in all ages and countries. Few, however, would argue that the mind of a savage is equal to that of a scholar or a saint, or that the lowest superstition of primitive man is the essence of all religion. The judgment of M. Salomon Reinach on religion is surely too severe: "Unless one admits the gratuitous and puerile hypothesis of a primitive revelation, the origin of religions must be sought in the psychology of man, not of civilized man, but of him who is furthest removed from civilization[2]." It may be asserted that psychologists are not concerned with the truth or falsity of beliefs and ideas, but only with their existence. True, the primary task of psychology is to note and examine the varieties of religious experience. But unless the phenomena of mind are a shifting scene of illusions, it should be possible to deter-

[1] O. Pfleiderer, *The Early Christian Conception of Christ*, pp. 153, 154.

[2] S. Reinach, *Cultes, Mythes, et Religions*, vol. I. Introduction.

mine by philosophic methods how far these beliefs are true and valuable, and whether these ideas correspond to a superhuman reality.

The elements of truth, which are found in the two views already considered, may be combined in the third or progressive view. We should welcome every affinity between one religious system and another, we should expect the thoughts of men of all ages to be in some way similar, because we believe that there is a gradual progress from the earliest beliefs towards ultimate truth.

Yet I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns[1].

The evolutionary theory of religion does not, in itself, disprove or discredit religious beliefs and ideas. For instance, Grant Allen disclaims any intention of attacking the belief in God, though his arguments are highly critical: "It (my enquiry) attempts to recover and follow out the various planes in the evolution of the idea of God, rather than to cast doubt upon the truth of the evolved concept[2]." Mr J. M. Robertson expresses the same view with regard to religion in general: "No historical principle is better established than this, that all historical religions run into and derive from some other religions, the creeds of all mankind being simply phases of a continuous evolution[3]." From the Christian standpoint, we ought not to be afraid of the evolutionary or progressive view of religion. If we believe that the Logos is "the light that lighteth every man," and that "God left not himself without witness," we should expect to find true and valuable ideas in all

[1] Tennyson, *Locksley Hall.*
[2] Grant Allen, *Evolution of the Idea of God*, p. 9.
[3] J. M. Robertson, *Pagan Christs*, p. 283.

systems of thought. The fact that an idea is found in the heathen religions does not prove it to be false and worthless, nor, on the other hand, does the survival of a belief in Judaism and Christianity necessarily prove it to be of permanent value. While we hold that the truth has been expressed in its highest and purest form in the Christian religion, we must continually work and strive for a deeper comprehension and fuller appreciation of the truth which has been revealed to us, and we should always be prepared to examine new aspects of the truth.

The religious system, which it is proposed to compare with Christianity, has been the subject of many essays and monographs in the last century. M. Lajard wrote in 1846 an *Introduction à l'étude du Culte de Mithra*, and Windischmann followed him in 1859 with "Mithra, ein Beitrag zur Mythengeschichte des Orients" (*Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, vol. 1.). In 1889 M. Franz Cumont published a complete collection of all the monuments relative to the cult of Mithra, and compiled a series of all the inscriptions and passages in pagan and Christian writers which refer to the Mithraic mysteries. Since the appearance of this masterly and comprehensive work, other scholars have written popular essays on the mysteries or have discussed special features of the cult. The writer's attention was first drawn to the subject by the reprint of a popular lecture by Mr J. M. Robertson in *The Religious Systems of the World*. Though he differs from Mr Robertson's conclusions on many points, he is grateful for the stimulus which was given to him towards further study and investigation. The references to the subject in some histories and treatises on the mystery religions have been so scanty and vague, and sometimes positively misleading, that the writer believes that there is room for

a full and frank discussion of doubtful and disputed points. Of course no attempt can be made to add to the facts collected by M. Cumont, but there is need to follow up certain lines of comparison between Mithraism and Christianity, which M. Cumont has treated with necessary brevity and a strict impartiality which every student of religion should try to imitate. We propose to discuss the most important religious ideas, and from these we hope to draw some general conclusions with regard to the similarities and differences between the two religions.

L. P.

April, 1921.

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CHAPTER I

ORIGINS AND ATTRIBUTES

No comparison of Mithraism with Christianity can be useful or even intelligible without an enquiry into their primitive origins. The sources of both can be traced back to remote antiquity.

The first home of Mithra is India. He is mentioned in the Rigveda, and is generally coupled with the supreme deity Varuna (Heaven).

Our sages, Mitra-Varuna of wide dominion, strong by birth, vouchsafe us strength that worketh well[1].

O Mitra-Varuna, ye by your greatness, both kings have firmly established earth and heaven.

Ye, Mitra-Varuna, firm, strong, awe-inspiring, are seated on a throne amid oblations[2].

At other times Mithra alone is addressed.

Mitra, when speaking, stirreth men to labour:
Mitra sustaineth both the earth and heaven.
Mitra beholdeth men with eyes that close not.
To Mitra bring, with holy oil, oblation[3].

Mithra appears, in the Rigveda, to be a god of light, and is, at any rate, distinct from the sun.

Their stablished way go Varuna and Mitra, what time they make the *Sun* ascend the heaven[4].

Both deities receive a common sacrifice.

To Varuna and Mitra we offer with songs....
May Varuna and Mitra, for our help, accept the sacrifice[5].

[1] *Hymns of the Rigveda*, Bk I. 2, *v.* 9.
[2] *Ibid.* Bk V. 62, *vv.* 3, 5.
[3] *Ibid.* Bk III. 59, *v.* 1.
[4] *Ibid.* Bk IV. 13, *v.* 2.
[5] *Ibid.* Bk V. 72, *vv.* 1, 3.

From India Mithra passes to Persia, where he preserves his connexion with the supreme deity, called Ahura or Ahura Mazda (Lord of Heavenly Wisdom). They are invoked together in the Zend-Avesta.

May Mithra and Ahura, the high gods, come to us for help[1].

We sacrifice unto Mithra and Ahura, the two great, imperishable, holy gods[2].

Mithra is a Yazata (god or genius worthy of sacrifice), and has been created as worthy of equal honour with Ahura Mazda.

Ahura Mazda spake unto Spitama Zarathustra, saying, Verily when I created Mithra, the lord of wide pastures, O Spitama! I created him as worthy of prayer as myself, Ahura Mazda[3].

We sacrifice unto Mithra, the lord of all countries, whom Ahura Mazda made the most glorious of all the gods in the world unseen[4].

Mithra, in the Zend-Avesta, is still regarded as the god of heavenly light. The name literally means friend, and so the light friendly to man[5]. One passage of the Avesta seems to be most appropriate to him as the god of all-pervading light.

Unto Mithra, the lord of wide pastures, who has a thousand ears, ten thousand eyes, a Yazata invoked by his own name[6].

He is closely connected with, but yet distinct from the Sun. He is addressed together with the Sun (Khôrshêd) in prayer.

We sacrifice unto the bright, undying, shining, swift-horsed Sun.

[1] Zend-Avesta, Mihir Yast, xxviii.
[2] *Ibid.* xxxv.
[3] *Ibid.* x. 1.
[4] Khôrshêd Nyâyis (Prayers to the Sun), 7.
[5] Darmesteter, *Ormuzd and Ahriman*, §§ 59–61. Mithra also means friendship, contract (Mihir Yast, xxix. 116, 117).
[6] Mihir Yast, x.

We sacrifice unto Mithra, lord of wide pastures. So may Mithra and Ahura, the two great gods, come to us for help[1].

And yet he is distinct from the Sun.

We sacrifice unto Mithra...who first of the heavenly gods reaches over the Hara, before the undying, swift-horsed sun[2].

In two places Mithra is described as driving in a chariot like the Sun.

Who drives along in his high-wheeled chariot, made of a heavenly substance[3].

For whom white stallions, yoked to his chariot, draw it, on *one golden wheel*, with a full shining axle[4].

It is only in later times that Mithra is generally (but not always) identified with the Sun. He is at first subordinated to Ahura Mazda, and then gradually occupies an isolated position, and becomes a unique object of worship, or is associated with other male and female deities.

The further stages in his progress bring Mithra in contact with Babylon and Asia Minor, and finally with the Western world.

As early as the fourteenth century B.C. we find the name of Mithra on a cuneiform inscription of a contract made by the Hittite king with the ruler of the Mitanni, a tribe in northern Mesopotamia. He is invoked together with Varuna and Indra.

(ilani) *mi-it-ra* as-si-il (ilani) *u-ru-u-na* as-si-el ilu *indar*[5].

His name is found in cuneiform as early as the seventh

[1] Khôrshêd Nyâyis, 6, 7. [2] Mihir Yast, iv. 13.

[3] *Ibid.* xvii. 67.

[4] *Ibid.* xxxii. 136; cakhra = wheel or sun-disc (Dr W. St Clair Tisdall, *Mythic Christs and the True*, p. 9).

[5] Winckler, *Mitteil. der deutsch. Or. Gesellschaft*, No. 35, 1907, p. 51; see Kluge, *Der Mithrakult* (*aus dem Alten Orient*, 1911), and W. J. Phythian Adams, *Mithraism*, p. 11.

century B.C.[1] The Achaemenid monarchs were devout worshippers of Ormuzd and of Mithra[2]. In the Behistun inscription Darius I (521–485) says: "By the grace of Ormuzd, I did this," and he has great respect for Apollo (ὃς Πέρσαις εἶπε πᾶσαν ἀτρέκειαν [truth]), whom he may have identified with Mithra, as we know that Mithra was regarded as a god of truth, like Apollo. Artaxerxes Mnemon (405–358), in the inscription at Susa, invokes "Anâhita utà *Mithra*[3]" by the side of the supreme deity Ormuzd. His successor, Artaxerxes Ochus (358–337) dedicated temples to them in all parts of the Persian Empire. In this way, Mithra must have found his way to Babylon, where he and Anâhita were assimilated to Shamash (the Sun-God) and Ishtar. Here the astrological speculations of the Chaldean magi were superimposed on primitive Mazdeism, and Mithra became the object of a magical cult. From Babylon Mithra passed to Syria[4] and Asia Minor, but here the details are more obscure. Owing to his association with Ishtar, Mithra was probably identified with Attis the lover of the Magna Mater or Cybele[5]. Still,

[1] The earlier Achaemenidae introduced Mazdeism in Armenia about 625 B.C.

[2] Darius placed emblems of Ahura Mazda on a tablet above his tomb (J. M. Robertson, *Pagan Christs*, p. 290).

[3] Cumont, *Textes et Monuments Figurés Relatifs aux Mystères de Mithra*, vol. I.; Weissbach u. Bang, *Die altpersischen Keilinschriften*. Anâhita was the heavenly spring, the goddess of waters, and is mentioned in the Avesta (Âbân Yast or Yast of the Waters).

[4] Mithra at Edessa (Mesopotamia), Jul. *Or.* IV. οἱ τὴν Ἔδεσσαν οἰκοῦντες, Ἡλίου ἱερὸν συγκαθιδρύουσιν. Cumont, *Revue Archéologique*, XII. 75.

[5] That may account for the confusion which Herodotus makes between Mithra and Anat-Mylitta, the Assyrian counterpart of Anâhita (Herod. I. 131, καλέουσι δὲ Ἀσσύριοι τὴν Ἀφροδίτην, Μύλιττα ...Πέρσαι δὲ Μίτραν). Anat and Beltis or Mylitta are properly the female forms of Anu and Bel (Canon Rawlinson, *Religious Systems of the World*, p. 34).

when the Great Mother was brought in 204 B.C. from Pessinus to Rome, there is no record of Mithra accompanying the goddess.

Mithra is next found on a monument erected by Antiochus I of Commagene (69–34 B.C.). He wears a bonnet on his head, which is surrounded by rays, and advances towards the king. About the same time (63 B.C.) the pirates of Cilicia were brought to Rome by Pompey. They were, according to the testimony of Plutarch, worshippers of Mithra.

τελετάς τινας ἀπορρήτους ἐτέλουν ὧν ἡ τοῦ Μίθρου καὶ μέχρι δεῦρο διασώζεται καταδειχθεῖσα πρῶτον ὑπ' ἐκείνων (Plut. *Vita Pompei*, 24).

Mithraism did not spread much further till the emperors Tiberius, Nero, and Vespasian imported mercenaries from Cappadocia, Pontus and Commagene into the Roman army. Then the new recruits disseminated the doctrines and erected monuments of Mithra in the Roman provinces on either side of the banks of the Rhine and the Danube.

It was not till the end of the first century that Mithraism was established at Rome. The earliest dedication to Mithra was a bilingual inscription of a freedman of the Imperial family of the Flavii (*circ.* 69–96 A.D.). The inscription is worth quoting, because it shows that Mithra was already identified with the Sun-God.

Soli invicto Mithrae T. Flavius Augusti libertus Hyginus Ephebianus donum dedit.

Ἡλίῳ Μίθραι Τ(ίτος) Φλάουιος Ὑγεῖνος διὰ Λολλίου πατρὸς ἰδίου.

[Th. Mommsen quotes an inscription (Neapol. 6864) as belonging to the time of *Tiberius*, but this is doubtful. "Claudius Suffecius sacer(dos) d(ei) Sol(is) inv(icti) M(ithrae)."]

It is a curious coincidence that behind the house of

Flavius Clemens, one of the early bishops of Rome, a Mithraic temple of the second century is situated, in which a statue of Mithra and a bust of the Sun-God have been found[1]. The first reference to Mithra in Latin literature occurs in the *Thebaid* of Statius (80 A.D.). The poet, invoking Apollo, says:

> seu te roseum Titana vocari
> *Gentis Achaemeniae* ritu, seu praestat Osirin
> Frugiferum, seu *Persei sub rupibus antri*
> *Indignata sequi torquentem cornua Mithram*[2].

From the second to the fourth century references to Mithra abound on monuments and in inscriptions, and in Christian and pagan literature. This rather lengthy historical survey will probably suffice to show the primitive origin of Mithra and to indicate possible points of contact between Mithraism and Judaism or Christianity.

When we turn to Christianity, we find ourselves on more familiar but still debatable ground. It is agreed that Christianity is rooted in Judaism, but historical criticism and the discovery of apocryphal books have compelled scholars to revise their opinions on certain questions. The two fundamental beliefs, which were taken over from Judaism into Christianity, were the beliefs in a Messiah and the Kingdom of God. It is with the first belief that we wish to deal for the present.

The belief in an individual, called the Messiah, arose about the eighth century B.C.[3] The title would be applicable to a prophet, priest, or king. The Messiah would be

[1] The house of Clemens and the Mithraic cave are beneath the present Chiesa di San Clemente at Rome.

[2] Statius, *Thebaid*, I. 717–720.

[3] The seed of woman or the seed of Abraham does not refer to any individual, and the Star in Balaam's vision is too vague a conception; see Dr C. A. Briggs, *Messianic Prophecy*, pp. 76, 88, 104.

either a prophet like Moses, a priest like Samuel, or a king like David (Deut. xviii. 25; 1 Sam. ii. 35; 2 Sam. vii. 13, 16). The conception of an ideal king predominated, and appears in the writings of most of the prophets. Isaiah foretells the coming of the Prince of Peace[1], and his contemporary Micah speaks of a ruler from Bethlehem, who shall be peace[2]. Jeremiah and Ezekiel both look forward to a king that will be like David[3]. The theocratic ideal is not, however, abandoned. Jahweh is still King of Israel, and fights at the right hand of the Messiah[4].

Before the time of the exile the picture of the Messiah had been drawn in its main outlines. The Messiah was conceived as a king, or at least as head of a line of kings[5]. He was to reign righteously, and to execute justice on the earth[6]. So far as we know, there is no trace of foreign influence in this conception. But, it may be said, the Jews came in contact with Babylonians and Persians during the exile, and they may have assimilated new beliefs. Let us see how far this hypothesis can be borne out by facts.

One of the new ideas which appear during the exile is that of the Suffering Servant of Jahweh. His features may have been partly modelled on the prophet Jeremiah, but otherwise it is generally believed that the prophetic writer was thinking not of an individual, but of the ideal people. "The prophet himself was unconscious of any connexion between this character and the ideal king[7]." Still less is there any trace of a connexion between the

[1] Is. ix. 6. [2] Micah v. 2, 5.
[3] Jer. xxx. 9; Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24.
[4] Zeph. iii. 15; Ps. xxiv. 8. Briggs, *op. cit.* p. 152.
[5] Jer. xxiii. 4; Ezek. xlv. 8, xlvi. 16.
[6] Is. xxxii. 1; Jer. xxiii. 5.
[7] Dr Stanton, *Jewish and Christian Messiah*, p. 107.

Suffering Servant of Jahweh and the Babylonian Marduk, prince of the gods, or Mithra, if he was ever regarded as a Suffering Saviour[1]. (As a matter of fact Mithra does not suffer himself, though he may be sorry to inflict suffering on other creatures.)

The same prophet refers to Cyrus as the Lord's anointed (מְשִׁיחוֹ, *mᵉshiḥō*). No doubt the Jews looked upon Cyrus as a Heaven-sent deliverer. His tolerant policy won him the favour and sympathy of both Jews and Babylonians. In the Cylinder inscription Cyrus ascribes his victory to Marduk[2], and he may also have been a worshipper of Ahura Mazda, as Darius I was after him. Still it has been pointed out that if the Jews were permitted to leave Babylon in the first year of Cyrus' reign, there was little opportunity for Jews exchanging ideas with the Persians[3]. Of course it is always possible that the Jews may have come in contact with Persian beliefs in the years before Cyrus' entry into Babylon, or that those, who returned later with Ezra and Nehemiah, would have learnt more about the Persian religion[4]. There is only one phrase in the book of Malachi, written about this time, which might suggest Persian influence[5]. But

[1] J. M. Robertson, *Pagan Christs*, p. 329, and Loisy, *Les mystères païens et le mystère chrétien*, p. 202, "Mithra un dieu souffrant." Stanton, *op. cit.* p. 122. There is no conception of a *suffering* Messiah in Jewish doctrine. The Targum of Jonathan on Is. liii. interprets the sufferer as God's servant Israel.

[2] "*The Lord* who makes the dead alive and shows goodwill in trouble and distress, approached him graciously." "*Marduk*—took compassion. *Cyrus*, king of Anshan, he called by name."

[3] Stave, *Einfluss des Parsismus auf das Judentum*, p. 52.

[4] Stave, p. 136 n. Darius in the Behistun inscription says: "I have made the text of the *Divine Law* (*Avesta*), and a commentary of the Divine law, and the prayer, and the translation. And it was written, and I sealed it. And then the ancient book was restored by me in all *nations*, and the *nations* followed it."

[5] Mal. iv. 2. It was applied to Christ in later times. Melito of

the title "sun of righteousness" is so ambiguous and at any rate metaphorical, that little importance can be attached to it.

The power of Persia, after its conquest by Alexander, was crushed, and its influence was dispersed to other countries. At the same time Jewish prophecy decayed, and the hope of a Messiah vanished entirely for a time. The Jews despaired of the restoration of the Davidic kingdom, and began to fix their gaze on the next world. God would send help from heaven, and destroy their enemies, and transport the righteous to a higher sphere. The place and function of prophecy were assumed by apocalypse.

In the earliest apocalypse, the book of Daniel, the "Son of Man" is generally interpreted not as an individual Messiah, but as ideal Israel, saints of the most High. Dr Stanton says that there is "no evidence that the Son of Man was understood to be the Messiah before Christian times[1]." This is no doubt true of the "Son of Man" in the book of Daniel, but in the book of Enoch the "Son of Man" appears to be an individual figure. The Parables of Enoch (96–64 B.C.) represent the "Son of Man" as a supernatural Being. "Before the sun and the signs (of the zodiac) were created, before the stars of the heaven were made, was his Name named before the Lord of Spirits[2]."

The other apocalypses of the second and first centuries B.C. adhere to the older conception of the Messiah as king,

Sardis *περὶ λουτροῦ*. "'Ηλιος *ἀνατολῆς*." Pseudo-Chrysostom, *de nativitate Domini*, II. p. 1091 C.

[1] Stanton, *op. cit.* pp. 109, 110; cp. p. 240. "Son of Man" is not used of the Messiah in Rabbinic literature, but "Anani" (coming with the clouds) is a common title.

[2] Enoch xlviii. 3; cp. xlvi. 3.

priest, and also prophet. The Sibylline Oracles (of which the date is doubtful) foretell that "God will send a *King* from the East (ἀπ' ἠελίοιο), who will put an end to evil war[1]." The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (109–106 B.C.) describe the Messiah as a *priest* from Levi or Judah[2], while the Book of Jubilees (105 B.C.) makes him one of the sons of Judah, and a *prince* like him[3]. The First Book of Maccabees declares that "Simon should be their leader and high-priest for ever, until there should arise a faithful *prophet*[4]." Again, the Psalms of Solomon (70–40 B.C.) represent the Messiah as a righteous king, and taught of God[5]. In contrast to the superhuman conception of the Parables of Enoch, it is said that the Messiah will not *faint* all his days, for God has made him strong in holy Spirit[6].

So far, there seems to be very little resemblance between the Persian idea of Mithra and the Jewish conception of the Messiah. Though Mithra was known and adored by Antiochus of Commagene (north Syria) in 69 B.C., he exerted no apparent influence on the Jewish religion. Mithra was and remained a nature-deity: the Messiah was originally conceived to be a natural but divinely appointed man, and only in the book of Enoch does he assume the character of a supernatural being, of a quite different kind from Mithra.

However, it may be suggested that there is more affinity between the Jewish Messiah and the Persian Soshyas. Though Soshyas is really distinct from Mithra, he is sometimes confused or combined with him in his

[1] Sib. Or. III. 652. (Philo, *de Proem. et Poen.* §§ 15–20. Messiah is a man of war, ἄνθρωπος καταστρατηγῶν καὶ πολεμῶν ἔθνη.)
[2] Test. Twelve Patr. Reub. vi.
[3] Jub. xxxi. 18, 19.
[4] 1 Macc. xiv. 41.
[5] Ps. Sol. xvii.
[6] Ps. Sol. *ib.*

functions. The name means "Benefactor," and he was supposed to be one of the sons of Zarathustra, who would appear at the end of the world. He is mentioned in the Avesta and also in the Bundahesh, which is a later work, completed about 651 A.D. The Avesta mentions him three times. "We worship the Fravashi of the holy Astvatereta (he who makes the bodily creatures rise up), whose name will be the victorious *Saoshyant*[1]." Again "we worship all the good, awful, beneficent Fravashis of the faithful, from Gaya Maretan down to the victorious *Saoshyant*[2]." The last passage is doubtful. "Make the Law of Mazda current, till the time when the victorious *Sôshyôsh* will make it current[3]." The Bundahesh gives the story of his birth, which will be discussed together with the birth of Mithra, and deals with his part in the general resurrection, which will be fully treated, when we come to the question of the future life and eschatology.

THE BIRTH OF MITHRA

The traditions about the birth of Mithra are conflicting. The earliest tradition is that Mithra was born from a rock. Justin Martyr (150 A.D.) first says that he was born from a rock (ἐκ πέτρας γεγενῆσθαι)[4], and later Christian writers call him the god de petra natus[5], or θεὸς ἐκ πέτρας[6], or τὸν πετρογενῆ θεόν[7]. St Jerome says that he was born in a rock by the heat of passion[8], but he may be confusing him with Agdistis, a Phrygian deity, who was born from a rock, fructified by Jupiter.

[1] Farvardin Yast [xiii. 28].
[2] *Ibid.* xiii. 30.
[3] Vistasp Yast, xxiv. 4.
[4] Justin Martyr, *Dial. cum Tryph.* 70
[5] Commodian (third century A.D.).
[6] Firmicus Maternus (346 A.D.), *De errore prof. relig.*
[7] John Lydus (490–560 A.D.), *de Mensibus*, III. § 26.
[8] St Jerome (331–420 A.D.), *adv. Jovin.* I. § 7.

The monuments represent Mithra either as a child or a young man issuing from a rock. Either a child rises from a rock, holding a torch and knife, or a young man is embedded up to his hips in a conical rock, and once with another rock on his head[1].

The rock was adored in the form of a conical pillar, and numerous dedications to it are found[2].

This curious myth admits of a natural explanation. The sky is a rock-vault. The Sanskrit or Persian word asman means rock or sky. Mithra and Asman are closely associated in the Avesta[3]. Mithra born from the rock is, therefore, the personification of light darting from the sky.

On the other hand there is a later tradition, found in Armenian writers of the fifth century A.D., that Mithra was the son of Ormuzd, and perhaps of a virgin mother.

Agathangus, an Armenian priest, relates a visit of St Gregory to the canton of Terdjan. "He went likewise to the temple of *Mihr*, who was said to be the *son of Aramazd*[4]."

Again, Elisaeus (Egishê) Vartabed, an Armenian historian, reports the answer of the Armenian bishops to the Viceroy Mihr-Nerseh.

(*a*) Thou hast said, that God was born from a woman: thou shouldst feel neither horror nor scorn at it....There is a thing still more curious: the god Mihr being born of a woman, as if one could have intercourse with one's own mother.

(*b*) One of your oldest sages has said that the god Mihr was born of a mother, who was of human race; but he is

[1] Cumont, II. 203, Monuments 18*a*, 19, and pp. 393, 395.

[2] *CIL.* III. 8679, Petr*e* genetrici; *CIL.* III. 4424, Petrae genetrici P. Aelius Nigrinus sacerdos votum solvit.

[3] Avesta, Khôrshêd Yast, vi.

[4] Cumont, vol. II. Agathangus, *History of reign of Tiridates*, chap. x.

none the less king, son of God, and valiant ally of the seven gods[1].

Lastly, Eznig, another Armenian writer, gives a slightly different form of the story. According to this story, Ahriman accuses Ormuzd of not knowing how to make *light*.

Now if he were wise, he would have intercourse with his mother, and he would have a son, the Sun (Miher); and he would likewise have intercourse with his sister, and the Moon (Mah) would be born.

Apparently, in one case, Mithra is born of his own act from a human mother, and in the other he is born of the divine mother of Ormuzd (though Elisaeus says that Ormuzd had a father but no mother). In neither case is this what we should call a virgin-birth[2].

Nor is the birth of Saoshyant, which is related in the Bundahesh, probably a virgin or divine birth. He is said to be the third son of Zarathustra.

Three times he (Zarathustra) came near to his wife Hvogvi and three times the seed fell upon the ground. The Ized Neriosengh took what was bright and strong in it and entrusted it to the Ized Anâhita. At the appointed time, it will be united again with a mortal womb: 99,999 Fravashis

[1] Windischmann (*Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, p. 62) quotes Elisaeus. Cumont, II. 5. Elisaeus, *History of Vartan* (vol. II. (*a*) translated by Langlois, p. 193 and by Karabazy Garabed, p. 35; (*b*) Langlois, p. 194, Karabazy, p. 38). Dr Tisdall (*Mythic Christs and the True*, p. 18) quotes rather differently from the Armenian original, Venice, 1864. (*a*) Mihr astouads i knoche dsanau = The God Mithra was born of a woman; (*b*) Mihr astouads mairadsin e i mardkanē = The God Mithra is incestuously born of a mortal mother.

[2] Some scholars, no doubt, do attempt to assimilate this form of the myth to Christian belief, *e.g.* C. G. Jung, *Psychology of the Unconscious*, p. 217. This, of course, would be mere mythology, not true theology.

of the faithful watch over it, lest the fiends destroy it. A maid, Eredat-fedhri, bathing in lake Kâsava, will conceive by it and bring forth the victorious Saoshyant, who will come from the region of the dawn to free the world from death and decay—when the dead shall rise and immortality commence[1].

If Zarathustra was a man, this is only a postponed human birth; if, as Darmesteter thinks, he is in some way mythical or divine, still we should hardly regard the birth of Saoshyant as a virgin-birth[2].

Before we leave the subject of the birth of Mithra, it may be worth while to refer to two stories, one mythical, the other historical, which are supposed to afford parallels to the Christian tradition. Cumont suggests that the Mithraic monuments show an "adoration of the shepherds" at the birth of Mithra[3]. It is necessary to examine the monuments closely, to discover what they do show. (A) Mon. 242 *b* 1°. One shepherd, caressing a goat or sheep, offers fruits to the young god. (B) Mon. 194 6°. Two persons are standing, one leaning his hand on a stick (shepherd's crook?). 7°. Mithra is born from the rock, two arms raised, in his right hand a knife, in his left a torch. Mon. 195. One kneeling, two standing, Mithra born from the rock[4]. Even if the details were clearer than they are, we do not think that there is a very close resemblance to the picture drawn for us by St Luke.

[1] Bundahesh, xxxii. 8. The whole of the myth, according to Darmesteter, belongs to the Avesta period; cp. Farvardin Yast, xiii. 62, "the seed of the holy Zarathustra," and Vendîdâd, Fargard xix, "till Saoshyant come up to life out of the lake Kâsava."

[2] L. H. Mills, in his *Introduction to the Gâthas*, affirms the historic reality and human personality of Zarathustra.

[3] Cumont, I. 162.

[4] *Ibid.* II. 139, 156. (Cumont, *Mystères de Mithra*, p. 164 n.)

Again M. Jean Réville[1] and Herr A. Dieterich[2] suppose that the Visit of the Magi has been modelled on the visit of Tiridates, king of Armenia, and his fellow-magi to the emperor Nero in 66 A.D. The visit is reported by Dio Cassius, Suetonius, and Pliny.

Tiridates addresses Nero in these terms: "I, Lord, am thy slave. I come to thee, my God, to worship thee as Mithras, and I shall be whatever thou mayst decree: for thou art to me Fate and Fortune[3]." Pliny tells us that Tiridates himself was a magus or priest, and initiated Nero into the mysteries, especially the sacred banquet[4]. It is argued that the story may have found its way by popular rumour into the Gospel of St Matthew. There is one common detail, that Tiridates wished to worship Nero, as the Magi wished to worship the King of the Jews: otherwise he came rather to obtain favours than to offer gifts. But it is equally reasonable to argue that, if Tiridates and his fellow-magi could travel to Rome from Armenia, there is nothing *a priori* improbable in the coming of the Magi from Babylon or Persia to Jerusalem. Even if we cannot point to the direct source of the narrative in St Matthew, we should require better evidence before we ascribe to it a pagan origin.

From the documentary evidence it seems clear that the Christian doctrine of the Virgin-birth was not borrowed from Mithraism. Nor are there any other pre-

[1] J. Réville (*Études publiées en hommage à la faculté de théologie de Montauban*, 1901, p. 339 foll.).

[2] A. Dieterich, *Die Religion des Mithras* (*Sonderabdruck aus Bonner Jahrbücher*, Heft 108, also *Zeitschrift für N.T. Wissenschaft*, 1902, p. 190).

[3] Dio Cassius, Bk LXIII. *καὶ ἦλθον πρὸς σὲ τὸν ἐμὸν θεὸν προσκυνήσων σε ὡς καὶ τὸν Μίθραν, κ.τ.λ.* Suetonius, *Nero*, 13, 30.

[4] Pliny, *N.H.* XXX. 16. Magus ad eum Tiridates venerat—magos secum adduxerat. *Magicis* etiam *cenis* eum initiaverat.

Christian myths from which the Christian doctrine can have been borrowed. Justin Martyr attributes the real or fancied resemblances in pagan myths to diabolic imitation. "When I hear that Perseus was begotten of a Virgin, I understand that this also was counterfeited by the deceitful serpent[1]." I agree with Mr J. M. Robertson, that the theory of diabolic imitation is absurd. On the other hand it is hardly conceivable that the Christians would have taken over these myths, which they regarded with unfeigned abhorrence, and then branded the originals as diabolic imitations. Origen dismisses the suggestion of Celsus that the Christian doctrine was borrowed from the Greek myths of Danae, Antiope, and others as frivolous ribaldry[2].

If we accept the psychological explanation, and say that the idea of Virgin-birth is common to all races at a certain stage of religious development, we ought to prove, first of all, that this statement is really correct, and, secondly, that this universally prevalent idea was never realized in fact. Consistent and thorough-going mythologists like Mr Robertson or Dr Frazer, will accept the latter conclusion. But those who do not regard religious ideas as pure illusions, will be inclined to think that the mind of the savage or the more civilized pagan was groping blindly for a truth which was clearly revealed in Christianity.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE WORD

We pass on now to consider the metaphysical attributes of Mithra. It will be remembered that, according to the Avesta, Mithra was a Yazata and created as worthy of

[1] Justin Martyr, *Dial. cum Tryph.* 70. We shall have to recur to this theory in dealing with other doctrines of Mithraism.

[2] Origen, *contra Cels.* I. 37.

equal honour with Ahura Mazda. He is also addressed as the Incarnate Word. "We sacrifice unto Mithra...high, holily clever, *the incarnate Word*, a warrior with strong arms[1]." But the same title is given to Sraosha, the priest-god or genius of worship[2]. He is invoked as "the incarnate Word, a mighty speared and lordly God[3]." Even a priest is called by that name. "Happy that man—for whom a holy priest, as pious as any in the world, who is the *Word incarnate*, offers up a sacrifice unto Mithra[4]."

One must be careful to distinguish this title from the holy word (Mãthra Spenta), which is simply the sacred text of the Avesta. "We worship the Mãthra Spenta and the Law of Mazda[5]." The law as emanating from Ahura is Mãthra Spenta, and his soul. This is found in the Vendîdâd, the law or code of purification. Ahura Mazda says to Zarathustra "Invoke, O Zarathustra! my Fravashi, who am Ahura Mazda, and whose soul is the *holy word*." Zarathustra then speaks:

I invoke Mithra, the lord of wide pastures,
I invoke the holy, tall-formed Sraosha,
I invoke the most glorious *holy word* (mãthra spenta)[6].

The Mãthra Spenta is even personified at times. "So mayst thou heal me, O Mãthra Spenta, thou most-glorious one! Mãthra Spenta, the all-glorious, replied unto me: How shall I heal thee?[7]"

The Incarnate Word appears to be an emanation from Ahura Mazda, or a personified abstraction. These personified abstractions are a special element of the Mazdean cosmology. Vohu-manô (good thought), Spenta Armaiti

[1] Mihir Yast, vii. 25. [2] Sraosha = obedience.
[3] Srosh Yast, v. 18, 23; cp. Sirôzah (prayer of thirty invocations), i. 17. Farvardin Yast, xxiv.
[4] Mihir Yast, xxxii. [5] Astad Yast, xviii. 8.
[6] Vendîdâd, Fargard xix. [7] Vendîdâd, Fargard xxii. 2.

(divine piety), and other qualities were hypostasized as Amesha Spentas (holy undying ones) and ranged below Ahura Mazda. The Incarnate Word does not find a place among them, so it must fall into another category.

There was a tendency among the Hebrews also to personify abstract powers, such as the Word and Wisdom of God. This thought is found in the Psalms[1], but is fully developed in the Apocrypha. "Thy all-powerful *Word* leaped from heaven out of the royal throne, a stern warrior into the midst of the doomed land[2]." This, no doubt, was one of the sources of Philo's conception of the Logos. Philo lavishes divine titles on the Logos, calling it the First-begotten Son[3], Image of God[4], High-Priest[5] and Mediator[6]. At the same time Moses and Aaron are apparently each designated λόγος[7]. The Logos of Philo was rather an abstract attribute or quality of God than a person. Drummond says: "The Logos is the thought of God, dwelling subjectively in the infinite mind, planted out and made objective in the universe[8]." Mr Robertson goes too far in saying that "for most neologizing Jews, in short, the Logos passed into personal status just as did Vohu-manô for the Mazdeans[9]." There is, to our mind,

[1] Pss. xxxiii. 6, cvii. 20, cxix. 89.

[2] Wisdom of Solomon, xviii. 15. This was the work of an Alexandrian Jew in the first century B.C.

[3] πρωτόγονος υἱός, Philo (edn. Cohn and Wendland, Berlin 1898), *de agricultura*, 12; *de confus. ling.* 14.

[4] εἰκὼν θεοῦ, *de mundi opificio*, 8; *de confus. ling.* 20, 28; *de somniis*, I. 41.

[5] ἀρχιερεύς, *de somniis*, I. 37.

[6] μέσος, in Exod. xxv. 22; μεθόριος, § 68; *Quis rer. divin. haeres.* 42.

[7] *De leg. alleg.* III. 15, ὑπό τε Ἀαρών, τοῦ λόγου; *de congressu*, 30, ὁ προφήτης λόγος, ὄνομα Μωυσῆς.

[8] Drummond, *Philo Judaeus*, II. 273.

[9] Robertson, *Pagan Christs*, p. 226.

a great difference between a personified abstraction and a concrete, historical personality. Whether St John appropriated the Logos of Philo or, as others are inclined to think, the Memrā of the Targumîm, he added an element of infinite value when he asserted that the Word became flesh, that is, was incarnate as man[1].

There is another title of Mithra, which seems to approximate him to Christ. That is the name of Mediator. We do not find any mention of this name in the Avesta, but Plutarch says that Mithra was so called by the Persians[2]. Ormuzd was like the light, and Ahriman like the darkness; and Mithra was in the middle of both: therefore the Persians call Mithra the Mediator. This name had at first a physical or astronomical meaning. Mithra occupied the middle space between light and darkness, heaven and hell. At Babylon he was identified with Shamash (the Sun), who occupied the middle position in the circle of the planets. At the same time Mithra was said to be mediator in a moral or theological sense[3]. He was the mediator between the unknowable and inaccessible God, and the human race. Shamash had similar functions at Babylon[4]. However that may be, we find the idea in

[1] Philo conceived the Messiah as a man of war. See above, p. 10, n. 1.

[2] Plut. *de Iside et Osiride*, 46, μέσον δ' ἀμφοῖν (Ormuzd and Ahriman, darkness and light) τὸν Μίθρην εἶναι· διὸ καὶ Μίθρην Πέρσαι τὸν Μεσίτην ὀνομάζουσιν.

[3] H. Böhlig, *Die Geisteskultur von Tarsos*, 1913, p. 93. Böhlig adduces as evidence the "Handschriften-Reste aus Turfân (Chinese Turkestan)," (F. W. K. Müller, *Sonderabdruck bei Georg Reimer*, Berlin, 1904). On p. 77 we read: Mitra marî khûrkhsîd (Mitra the Lord the Sun)...hîyâr âvad pâdâr (friend and protector). But this is a Manichaean fragment, and so must be admitted to be very late testimony (F. Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, II. 324, n. 1).

[4] Tiele, *Assyrische Geschichte* (1886), p. 525, Shamash = der Vermittler or Mediator; Cumont, *Mystères de Mithra*, p. 107.

Philo of Alexandria, and then applied as often to Moses as to the Logos. "The Word of God being in *the middle* (μέσος), fills the whole and is *mediator* (μεσιτεύει) and conciliator, working for friendship and harmony: for he is always the cause and creator of fellowship" (κοινωνίας —δημιουργός)[1]. As Mediator, the Logos stands between the creature and the Creator. "The Father gave a gift to the archangelic and most ancient Word, that he should stand on the middle line (μεθόριος) and divide the creature from the Creator[2]." At other times, he applies the title to Moses. "It behoved us to employ mortal *mediators* and conciliators (ἐπικήροις μεσίταις καὶ διαιτηταῖς)...and thinking of this we asked some time one of the *mediators* (τινος τῶν μεσιτῶν). Speak to us, that we die not (Exod. xx. 19)." This evidently refers to Moses[3]. Again, Moses acts as mediator in the incident of the Golden Calf. "As *mediator* and reconciler he did not recoil at once" (οἷα μεσίτης καὶ διαλλακτὴς οὐκ εὐθὺς ἀπεπήδησεν)[4]. In the N.T. Christ is generally compared as mediator to Moses, except in St Paul's 1st Epistle to Timothy[5]. From this we should conclude that the Jews of Alexandria, whether they were remotely influenced by Persian ideas or not, were the immediate antecedents of St Paul and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Again it is the historical personality of Christ which makes all the difference between

[1] Philo, in Exod. xxv. 22, § 68. [2] *Quis rer. divin. haeres.* 42.

[3] Philo, *de somniis*, I. 142, 143.

[4] *Vita Mosis*, I. 166; cp. *Assumption of Moses*, I. 14, καὶ προεθεάσατο ἐμὲ ὁ θεὸς πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου εἶναί με τῆς διαθήκης αὐτοῦ μεσίτην.

[5] Gal. iii. 19, 20, ἐν χειρὶ μεσίτου (Moses), ὁ δὲ μεσίτης (Moses); Heb. viii. 6, ix. 15. xii. 24, κρείττονος διαθήκης μεσίτης (Christ better than Moses); 1 Tim. ii. 5, εἷς καὶ μεσίτης Θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπων, ἄνθρωπος Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς. The stress is laid there on the humanity of our Lord as fitting Him for the office of mediator.

Persian cosmology or Alexandrian theosophy, and the theology of the New Testament. Christ is the true mediator because He revealed to men the character of God as Love and reconciled them to God by His life and death of self-sacrifice[1].

[1] Cp. Julian, *Or.* IV. *in regem Solem*, 133, 138. The sun is μέσος ἐκ μέσων, the greatest God. He defines this *mediation* (μεσότητα) as not that which is perceived in opposites, being equidistant from the extremes, but that which unifies and combines distinct elements (τὴν ἑνωτικὴν καὶ συνάγουσαν τὰ διεστῶτα). But Julian was influenced by Christian beliefs.

CHAPTER II

SACRIFICE

THE Mithraic mysteries, like the mysteries of Eleusis and Dionysus and the historic religions, set forth a scheme of redemption to be accomplished through sacrifice. The centre of Mithraic worship, which was represented on all the bas-reliefs of their temples, was the Bull-sacrifice. The choice of this animal is due to natural causes, and the conception goes back to primitive antiquity. The bull is an animal, which to the primitive herdsman is the most natural type of the procreative energies[1]. It is used in the Rigveda as a symbol of Parjanya, god of thunder and rain, Agni the god of fire, and Indra as the Sun[2]. In the Avesta the bull is the primitive animal, which was created by Ormuzd and killed by Ahriman. It is invoked as the maker of growth and increase[3]. "Hail, holy bull! Hail to thee, beneficent bull! Hail to thee, who makest increase!" The primeval bull preceded the primeval man, Gäyômard, and the first couple, Matrô and Matrôyâô[4]. When it passed away, fifty-five species of grain grew up from its marrow and from its limbs[5]. The seed of the ox was carried up to the moon[6]. The bull is called *Gâus* in the Avesta, which also means *earth*, and

[1] J. G. Frazer, *Golden Bough*, Part I, vol. II. p. 368; Lewis Spence, *Myths and Legends of Ancient Egypt*, p. 284. The Bull is worshipped as a symbol of strength.

[2] Rigveda, Parg. Bk v. Hymns 83, 101, 102; Agni, Bk III. 15, 27; Indra, Hymns 30, 38, 40, 46.

[3] Vend. Fargard xxi and note.

[4] Bundahesh, iii. 17, iv. 1.

[5] Bundahesh, x. 1, xiv. 1.

[6] Sirozah, i. 12; Mâh Yast, 1.

so the moon is called gao-cithra, containing the seed of the bull[1]. The *soul* of the bull was worshipped with sacrifice and prayer[2].

Mithra is only once addressed as a bull[3]. "When will that *bull*, Mithra, the lord of wide pastures, bring us back, and make us reach the stables?" In all the monuments, Mithra pursues the bull, carries it backwards on his shoulders, and slays it in the cave[4]. Sometimes the bull is depicted as having three or seven ears of corn in his tail[5], but in one case three ears of corn come out of the dagger-wound made by Mithra[6]. The god seems to turn away with sad countenance, as if unwilling to perform the sacrifice. On either side there are two smaller figures, called Cautes and Cautopates, one holding a lifted, the other a lowered, torch. They bear some definite and permanent relation to Mithra. As the god is called τριπλάσιος Μίθρας[7], we accept the explanation of Dieterich as most probable, that the three figures mean "the rising, shining, and setting sun[8]."

[1] Dr Tisdall, *Mythic Christs and the True*, p. 19.

[2] This was called Goshurun. Sirozah, ii. 12; Bahrâm Yast 54.

[3] Mihir Yast, xxii. 86. The cows are the clouds in Vedic mythology.

[4] So Mithra was called βουκλόπος θεὸς, and the act of carrying to the cave Transitus.

[5] Cumont, II., Mon. 246, 251, three ears; Mon. 245, seven ears.

[6] *Ibid.* Mon. 65; cp. Story of Two Brothers (nineteenth dynasty of Egypt) d'Orbiney Papyrus. One brother changed into sacred bull (Apis). When the bull was killed by Pharaoh, two big drops of blood fell from his neck, and sprang up in the form of two trees.

[7] Denys the Areopagite, *Ep.* VII. (fourth century): εἰσέτι Μάγοι τὰ μνημόσυνα **τοῦ τριπλασίου Μίθρου** τελοῦσιν.

[8] A. Dieterich, *Die Religion des Mithras* (*Bonner Jahrbücher*, p. 33) and Cumont, *Mystères de Mithra*, p. 108; *contra* Legge, *op. cit.* p. 246; cp. Lewis Spence, *Myths and Legends of Ancient Egypt*, p. 136. Ra (Sun-God) says: "I am Khepera in the morning, and Ra at noon-day, and Tem in the evening."

There are many details which are obscure, and do not concern us here, but the general sense of the nature-myth may be explained in this way[1]. Mithra, as the god of light or the Sun, strikes his rays into the earth, and produces all kinds of life. It is a drama not of the destruction of life, but rather of the re-creation of life out of death. Life out of death is the keynote of all the solar and vegetation myths[2].

There are two subsidiary questions concerning the Bull-sacrifice which may be discussed at this point. The first is, Did the mythical or subsequently ritual sacrifice of the bull take the place of a human sacrifice[3]? According to the ancient myth preserved in the Bundahesh, the death of the first man, Gâyômard, followed almost immediately after the death of the primeval bull[4]. There may have been a human sacrifice in the primitive celebration of the Mithraic mysteries, but we find no record of this rite. Many old folk-lore customs and religious rites indicate that human sacrifice has given way to a symbolic or animal sacrifice. Apparently it was customary in Persia to *bury* alive young boys and girls to appease the god of the under-world[5]. The Magi were supposed to use

[1] J. M. Robertson, *Pagan Christs*, p. 299. So Yima, the first man or king, pressed the earth with his golden ring, and bored it with his dagger, and it brought forth abundantly. (Vend. Fargard ii. 10, 14.)

[2] Loisy (*Les mystères païens et le mystère chrétien*, p. 194) says that the bull is the corn-spirit—and the bull-sacrifice was destined not to signify but to procure the renewal of nature.

[3] Cp. Lewis Spence, *Myths of Ancient Egypt*, p. 103 (Plut. *de Is. et Osir.* 31). No bullock could be offered to the gods without the seal of the Sphragistae (order of priests) stamped on it. Their impress is "a man upon his knees with his hands tied behind him, and a sword pointed at his throat." [4] Bundahesh, iv. 1.

[5] Herod. VII. 114 (*οἱ Μάγοι*)—*παῖδας καὶ παρθένους—ζώοντας κατώρυσσον*; cp. *ibid.* I. 140, *οἱ Μάγοι αὐτοχειρίῃ πάντα πλὴν κυνὸς καὶ ἀνθρώπου κτείνουσιν.*

the entrails of children for purposes of divination[1]. Pliny the Elder accuses the Magi of ritual murder, but these may be ignorant rumours and slanders[2]. Still, the charge of human sacrifice is brought against Mithraism on very doubtful evidence by ancient and modern Christian writers. Eusebius quotes Porphyry referring to Pallas, who made the best collection of the facts about the Mithraic mysteries, as saying that *human sacrifices in general* (τὰς ἀνθρωποθυσίας τὰς παρὰ πᾶσιν) were abolished in the reign of the emperor Hadrian[3]. This is a general statement, which does not attribute human sacrifices to the Mithraic mysteries in particular. Some years later Lampridius accuses the emperor Commodus of defiling the Mithraic mysteries by a real murder, which, according to him, was a perversion of the proper rite[4]. It is clear that the sacrifice, even if it was originally real, had properly become symbolic in the time of the Roman Empire. A later writer of the sixth century asserts that, in the mysteries relative to the Sun, a sword stained with the blood of a man, who had died by violence, was produced by the priest and displayed before the eyes of the initiated[5]. If this rite was performed in earlier times, it

[1] Juv. *Sat.* VI. 550

Armenius vel *Commagenus* haruspex
...rimabitur exta catelli
Interdum et *pueri*.

[2] Pliny, *N.H.* XXX. 6, nam *homines immolare* etiam gratissimum. We know that similar slanders were circulated against the Christians.

[3] Eusebius, *Prep. Evangel.* IV. 16, § 7 on Porphyry, *de abstinentia*, II. 56.

[4] Lampridius, *Commodus*, c. 9, Sacra Mithriaca *homicidio vero polluit*, cum illic aliquid ad speciem timoris vel dici vel fingi soleat.

[5] Zacharias the Scholastic (*Life of the patriarch Severus of Antioch*, 514 A.D.), "Why in the mysteries relative to the Sun, do the pretended gods manifest themselves to the initiated only

would probably have given rise to the idea of a real sacrifice.

Another argument for human sacrifices in the Mithraic mysteries is the discovery of human bones in Mithraic spelaea or temples.

Socrates, the Church historian (380–450 A.D.), writing of a riot at Alexandria in the reign of the emperor Julian, says that there was a place in the city, in which the Greeks formerly celebrated the rites of Mithra, and sacrificed men. Again he speaks of a shrine where the mysteries of the Greeks were hidden. There were many skulls of men, young and old, which rumour asserted to be formerly put to death[1]. However his contemporary Sozomen (408–450 A.D.) does not support this statement. He says that a shrine was discovered, where images and perhaps even some implements (ὄργανα) were found of those who were initiated there[2].

Skeletons, also, have been found, one at a Mithreum at Kroisbach, in a coffin made of tiles, the other at Sarrebourg chained to a Mithraic bas-relief[3]. As regards the first, it has been suggested that the Mithreum was used as a burial ground for the poor, and as to the second it is supposed that a Mithraic priest was executed for breaking the laws of Theodosius against paganism and chained to the bas-relief in order to profane the shrine for ever[4]. Lastly Mithraic caves have been discovered in modern times, with human remains. One, found in 1869

when the priest produces a sword stained with the blood of a man dead by violence?"

[1] Socrates, *Hist. Eccles.* III. 2, 7.

[2] Sozomen. ὄργανα do not generally mean limbs of the body except in a physiological treatise.

[3] Cumont, II., Mon. 223*g* Kroisbach; Mon. 519 (2) Sarrebourg.

[4] We know that the mystagogue Maximus was implicated in a plot in 371 A.D. and put to death.

at Vieux-en-Val-Romey, consisted of a tunnel (boyau) and a subterranean shelter, which contained many ashes mixed with bones of all kinds of animals or even human bones. The other was found in 1882 above Glaneck, in Carinthia. There, according to Hauser, were found teeth of children and knee-joints (rotules)[1]. It is just as reasonable to suppose that the Mithraic grottos were used as burial grounds for the worshippers as that remains of human sacrifices were hidden underground. The charge of human sacrifice, at least in the Christian era, must be regarded as not proven.

The second question with regard to the Bull-sacrifice is this, What is the relation of the Mithraic sacrifice to the Taurobolium[2]? The latter rite seems to have been originally distinct from the Bull-sacrifice of Mithra, but from its outward similarity it came to be connected with Mithraic worship. The question is somewhat complicated, because the student is almost overwhelmed by the welter of nature-cults in Asia Minor, and because syncretism is in full blast throughout those districts.

It will be remembered that Artaxerxes Mnemon coupled the worship of Mithra with Anâhita, the goddess of fertility in men and women[3]. Horses, oxen, and lambs were offered to her[4]. When Mithra-Anâhita passed to Babylon, they were identified with Shamash-Ishtar. So Anâhita was regarded as a Semitic Ἀφροδίτη[5]. From Babylon the

[1] Cumont, Mon. 237 Glaneck. Hauser, *Mitteilungen der K. K. Centralcommission*, VIII. p. 22 (1882). Mon. 275*b* Vieux-en-Val-Romey.

[2] See Cumont, *Les Mystères de Mithra* and *Le taurobole et le culte d'Anâhita* (*Revue Archéologique*, XII. 132); G. Zippel, *Das Taurobolion* (*Festschrift für L. Friedländer*, 1895).

[3] Avesta, Aban Yast, i. [4] Aban Yast, vi. foll.

[5] Clem. Alexandrinus on authority of Berosus (260 B.C.) calls her Ἀφροδίτη-Ἀναΐτις.

couple moved to Asia Minor, and Mithra-Anâhita were assimilated to Attis and Cybele. At the same time Anâhita was confounded with Artemis Tauropolos as the goddess of fertility[1]. In Lydia and Philadelphia, the goddess was called Μητὴρ Ἀναείτις, which gave her a resemblance to the Magna Mater or Cybele. When Cybele and Attis moved to Rome in 204 B.C.[2] Mithra seems to have remained behind at Tarsus in Cilicia. According to Cumont (I. 334) the Taurobolium must have existed in the temples of Anâhita in Cappadocia. We do not hear of a Taurobolium in Italy till 134 B.C., when it was performed at Puteoli in honour of Venus Caelestis (=Ἀφροδίτη Οὐρανία, the great female deity of the Semites)[3]. Later it was accomplished in honour of the Phrygian goddess at Ostia[4]. The Corybantes or Galli, priests of Cybele and Attis, mutilated themselves in honour of these two deities on March 24th (Dies Sanguinis). This practice was regarded with disfavour by the Romans[5]. Beside the ceremony of mutilation, taurobolia were performed in honour of Cybele, and criobolia in

[1] Pausanias, III. 16, 8 (transl. Dr J. G. Frazer, vol. I.). The Cappadocians claim to possess the image of the Tauric goddess, but a like claim is set up by the Lydians (ἀμφισβητοῦσι δὲ καὶ Λυδῶν οἷς ἐστὶν Ἀρτέμιδος ἱερὸν Ἀναιτίδος).

[2] The rock-image of Cybele connected her with Agdistis (a double of Attis) who was born from a rock. Strabo, X. 3, 12. The Berecyntians honour Rhea μητέρα καλοῦντες θεῶν καὶ Ἄγδιστιν καὶ Φρυγίαν θεὸν μεγάλην; *CIGr.* 3886, θεοὶ Ἀνγδιστεῖς (=mother of the gods and Attis). Agdistis would be likened to Mithra (θεὸς ἐκ πέτρας).

[3] *taurobolium Veneris Caelestae* et pantelium (highest initiation) Herennia per Ti. Claudium sacerdotem iterata est.

[4] *CIL.* XIV. 40. [Taurobolium and criobolium in time of Marcus Aurelius.] Taurob(olium factum matri deum magn. Ideae) M. Aureli(i Antonini). Reverse, criobolium factum (matri deum magn. Ideae).

[5] 101 B.C. A slave unmanned himself, and was driven out of the city. 77 B.C. A Gallus was disqualified by the consul Aemilius Lepidus because he was neither man nor woman (Val. Max. 7, 7, 6).

honour of Attis. The two are nearly always mentioned together in inscriptions[1]. The ceremony seems to have consisted in the sacrifice of the bull or the ram, and the *throwing* of the testicles (vires) of the animal to a certain spot, where an altar was erected[2]. This would explain the name of the ceremony, better than any confusion with Ταυροπόλος.

In the second or third century A.D. the taurobolium was performed for the welfare of the emperor or the community. We find an inscription at Lyons referring to a *Taurobolium* offered for the emperor Hadrian[3]. A group-Taurobolium was celebrated at Lactora (Gaul) on October 18th, 176 and December 8th, 241. The priest performed the ceremony by proxy for the emperor, and Prudentius describes the rite in all its repulsive details. The high priest (archigallus) descends into a pit, and boards are placed over it, and holes bored in them. Then a bull is slaughtered on the platform, and the stream of blood descends on the priest's head[4]. The emperor Julian probably submitted to the purification himself[5].

In the fourth century, individuals would perform the

[1] *Inscript. Gr. Sic. et It.* 1020 (*Crescens and Leontius*), ὄργια συνρέξαντε θεᾷ παμμήτορι Ῥείῃ **κριοβόλου** τελετῆς καὶ **ταυροβόλοιο** φερίστης.

[2] *Inscription of Crescens and Leontius* (*Inscript. Gr. Sic. et It.* 1020), ἥμασι μυστιπόλοις βωμὸν ὑπερτίθεσαν. Over the mystic throw (the thrown members) was the altar set up.

[3] *Taurobolio* matris, quod factum est pro salute *Hadriani*... item dendrophorus (official of Attis) *vires* excepit et a *Vaticano* transtulit. Heliogabalus (218) was himself initiated into the ceremony. Lampridius, 7, 1: Matris etiam Deum sacra accepit et tauroboliatus est—omnia fecit quae Galli facere solent. Tertullian, *Apol.* 25 (for Marcus Aurelius, 180 A.D.).

[4] Prudentius, *Peristephanon*, X. 1019–1035; cp. Firmicus Maternus (*de Errore Prof. Rel.*), 27: taurobolium quid vel criobolium scelerata te sanguinis labe perfundit?

[5] Greg. Naz. *Or.* IV. Αἵματι οὐχ ὁσίῳ τὸ λουτρὸν ἀπορρύπτεται and Sozomen, V. 2, 1.

ceremony themselves. In 370 A.D. Petronius Apollodorus celebrated both the taurobolium and criobolium and put up an altar[1]. In 376 A.D. Sextilius Agesilaus Aedesius consecrated an altar to the mother of the gods and Attis[2]. Lastly, we may refer to Nicomachus Flavianus (394 A.D.), who celebrated a Taurobolium and wrote a poem about it[3]. The blood-bath was believed to have the effect of purification and new life either for twenty years or for all time.

From these facts it may be concluded that the Taurobolium was not an integral part of the Mithraic mysteries[4]. But evil communications corrupt good morals, and there is no doubt that Mithraism, which was essentially a pure and manly religion, has suffered in reputation by its association with these orgiastic cults of Asia Minor. Still, the Bull-sacrifice was the symbolic representation of a nature-myth, and was intended to signify or to stimulate the renewal of plant-life.

[1] *CIL.* VI. 509, *κριοβόλου τελετῆς ἠδ' ἔτι ταυροβόλου μυστιπόλος τελετῶν ἱερῶν ἀνεθήκατο βωμόν.*

[2] *CIL.* VI. 510, Aedesius—*taurobolio criobolioque in aeternum renatus*, and Frazer, *Attis*, I. 275.

[3] Nicom. Flav. *Anth. Lat.* v. 57 foll.

> Quis tibi, taurobolus, vestem mutare suasit
> sub terram missus, pollutus sanguine tauri,
> vivere cum speras viginti mundus in annos.

Cp. *CIL.* VI. 502. Rufus Volusianus (383 A.D.) iterato *viginti annis* expletis taurobolii sui aram constituit et consecravit.

[4] (*a*) Toutain (*Le culte de Mithra, Bibliothèque des Hautes Études*, vol. 25), p. 138, "Le taurobole, au sens précis et rituel de ce mot, n'a jamais fait partie de la liturgie mithraique"; contra Gasquet, *Essai sur le culte et les mystères de Mithra*, p. 75, "On a prétendu, bien à tort selon nous, de faire du taurobole et du criobole le privilège exclusif du culte de Cybèle"; see Loisy, *Les mystères païens et le mystère chrétien*, p. 122, n. 2.

(*b*) One inscription connects Mithra and the Taurobolium, *CIL.* VI. 511. PATER SACRORUM INVICT. METHRAE TAUROBOLIATUS.

It is now necessary to consider the place and meaning of sacrifice in Hebrew religion. Sacrifice was both an act of offering and an act of communion. The aspect of communion has been brought out in full relief by Prof. Robertson-Smith and other scholars. There are two kinds of sacrifice, animal and vegetable, which may be represented by זבח (*zebaḥ*) and מנחה (*minḥa*). The one word means slaughtering, the other means gift. We are not quite sure whether we agree with Prof. Robertson-Smith in saying that "the leading idea in animal sacrifices is not a gift made over to God, but an act of communion[1]." He points out later that some animal sacrifices are made wholly over to the god. These are the sin offering (חטאת, *ḥattath*), and the burnt offering (עולה, *'olah*). There were other sacrifices of which the god and the worshipper partake, such as zebaḥ and שלמים, shelāmim (*peace* or *vow* offerings[2]). The blood and fat of the intestines were reserved to the deity[3], but the rest was shared by the worshippers in a social feast[4]. One would be inclined to think that both the minḥa and the 'olah were definitely gifts made to God. Prof. Robertson-Smith himself asserts that the fire-offering is a food offering etherealised in the fragrant smoke[5]. At the same time, we are not prepared to deny that the zebaḥ is an act of communion and a sacrificial feast. Even at these feasts, the blood, as the special seat of life, is offered to the deity[6]; the flesh of the peace-offerings must be eaten on the same day, or afterwards

[1] Robertson-Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 226.
[2] Robertson-Smith, *op. cit.* p. 236.
[3] Blood, Gen. ix. 4; Lev. xvii. 10, 11; Deut. xii. 23; cp. 1 Sam. xiv. 32, 33. Fat, Lev. iii. 5; 1 Sam. ii. 15, 16.
[4] 1 Sam. ix. 12, 24; Exod. xxiv. 11.
[5] Gen. viii. 21; Lev. iii. 5.
[6] Exod. xxiv. 6.

burnt with fire[1]. The minḥa was an offering of first-fruits[2], and the zebaḥ, especially the Passover, was originally an offering of firstlings[3].

There are two views which may be taken of animal sacrifice. The animal victim is either a symbol or a substitute of the worshipper or some other person. According to the first view, the material gift is a symbol. The true value of the offering lies in the dedication of the worshipper's heart. This is regarded as a too subtle view by Prof. Robertson-Smith[4]. But whether the worshipper was conscious of this symbolic interpretation or not, unless he did offer himself in heart and will, the animal offering had little real value. That is why the prophets denounced sacrifices, because men were content to offer sacrifices instead of offering themselves, body and soul, to God[5].

The animal as symbol of the god is not found in Hebrew religion, though it is common in the Greek mysteries, the Egyptian and perhaps other religions[6]. Such ideas were really foreign to Hebrew religion.

[1] Lev. vii. 15, xix. 6. [2] Ex. xxiii. 19.

[3] Ex. xiii. 12, 15; Numb. xviii. 17. Robertson-Smith, p. 224. Minḥa was not so ancient as zebaḥ, for nomadic life is older than agriculture. That may explain partly the preference shown to Abel's sacrifice over that of Cain. If bread was offered with the flesh, it was generally leavened bread (hamets); (Lev. vii. 13; Amos iv. 5). But *unleavened* bread (mazzoth) seems to be offered for the Nazirite (Numb. vi. 17); cp. Ex. xxiii. 18.

[4] Robertson-Smith, *op. cit.* p. 392.

[5] Is. i. 11; Jer. vi. 20 (cp. 1 Sam. xv. 22); Hos. vi. 6.

[6] Loisy, *Les mystères païens*, pp. 25, 58. The bull represented Dionysus-Zagreus in the mysteries. Firmicus Maternus says (*de Err. Prof. Rel.* 6): Cretenses—verum laniant dentibus taurum. The little pig was perhaps the corn-spirit or Coré gone below the ground, in the mysteries of Demeter. The soul of Osiris passed into the bull Apî, and there was an annual procession and sacrifice of the sacred bull. Whether the Hebrews worshipped Apî, or Jahweh, in the form of the Golden Calf, it was an idolatry which soon disappeared. They never sacrificed bulls as symbols of Jahweh.

On the other hand, the animal victim may have been a substitute for a human victim. Prof. Robertson-Smith refers to the general belief that animal sacrifices were substitutes for the life of a man, but rejects this as a false inference. He regards human sacrifice originally as a sacrifice of communion, which was tasted by the worshippers[1]. This cannibalism, so far as it existed among the Hebrews, was caused by famine, not by any sort of quasi-religious belief[2].

However, there are traces of human sacrifice in ancient Hebrew religion and custom. The stories of Abraham and Isaac, Jephthah and his daughter, certainly suggest the practice of human sacrifice as an offering to Jahweh. In the first instance, a ram was substituted for the human victim, but in the second case the sacrifice seems to have been repeated[3]. In later historical times there may have been human sacrifices in disguise, such as the hanging of the seven sons of Saul before the Lord[4], and the death of the first-born son of Hiel the Bethelite, consequent on the rebuilding of the walls of Jericho[5]. But as a general rule, human sacrifices came to be offered to evil spirits or to the deities of the Ammonites or the Phoenicians. The Psalmist says that the people sacrificed their sons and daughters unto demons[6]; Ahaz and Manasseh made their

[1] Robertson-Smith, *op. cit.* pp. 361, 365, 366.

[2] 2 Kings vi. 29; Lev. xxvi. 29; Deut. xxviii. 57; Jer. xix. 9; Ezek. v. 10.

[3] Gen. xxii. 13; Judges xi. 39, 40, "It became a custom in Israel" is joined in the Massoretic text to verse 39, and תַּנּוֹת might perhaps mean "celebrate" in the sense of performing a rite.

[4] 2 Sam. xxi. 6–9. They were put to death at the time of barley-harvest, no doubt to *drive away* famine and procure a good crop.

[5] 1 Kings xvi. 34; cp. Josh. vi. 26; cp. Deut. xxi. 23 קללת אלהים תלוי.

[6] Ps. cvi. 37, 38, demons = shēdim; cp. Deut. xxxii. 17.

sons to pass through the fire, probably as an offering to Molech or Milcom of the Ammonites or the Baalim of the Phoenicians[1]. We know from Philo Byblius that the Phoenicians used to sacrifice a son, probably the first-born, to Kronos, whom they called El[2], and Hamilcar sacrificed his son at the siege of Agrigentum (407 B.C.)[3]. This and like customs were also common in Greek religion and history[4]. This rite of human sacrifice, especially of the first-born son, has been correctly explained as "the offering to the deity of a peculiarly precious gift, representing a maximum of self-deprivation in the sacrificers[5]."

One important question remains to be considered, whether the sacrifice of the lamb at the Passover took the place of an original sacrifice of the first-born.

The Passover is believed by some modern scholars to belong to the pre-agricultural or nomadic stage of Hebrew

[1] 2 Kings xvi. 3, xxi. 6; Jer. vii. 31; cp. 2 Kings xxiii. 10 and Lev. xviii. 21. There is a vivid description of such a sacrifice in Flaubert's *Salambo* (=צלם בעל, image of Baal). Cp. Lampridius, *Heliog.* vii., *Salambonam* etiam omni planctu et jactatione Syriaci cultus exhibuit.

[2] Porphyry, *de Abst.* II. 56, ἔθυον τῶν **φιλτάτων** τινὰ ἐπιψηφίζοντες Κρόνῳ, from Philo Bybl. *Hist. Gr.* III. 571; cp. Euseb. *Prep. Ev.* I. 10. First-born son of Kronos called Ἰέδουδ (cp. Hebr. ידיד, beloved) and IV. 16.

[3] Diod. XIII. 36; cp. King of Moab (2 Kings iii. 27).

[4] Paus. VI. 20. A naked child was placed in battle front by the Eleans (J. C. Lawson, *Modern Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion*, pp. 272–3) who then changed into a serpent. Probably the child was sacrificed, and then became a δαίμων, and fought, in the form of a serpent, on the side of the Eleans. Maleus crucified his only son, adorned in royal robes, before the walls of Carthage (Justin, XVIII 7). Infants were sacrificed in Africa till Tertullian's time (Tert. *Apologeticus*, 6). At the Thargelia a man and a woman were sacrificed to Apollo to ensure a good harvest.

[5] J. M. Robertson, *op. cit.* p. 157. The distinction drawn by Prof. Robertson Smith (*op. cit.* p. 484 and cp. p. 394) that it was *not* the most costly offering, but the most sacred kind of victim, seems too subtle.

life, and to have been afterwards con nected with the harvest festivals of the Canaanites[1]. It was, in itself, "a sacrifice of firstlings of sheep and oxen, and originally also of *men*[2]." There are certain facts which may be adduced in favour of this view.

The first-born sons belonged by right to Jahweh (Exod. xiii. 2, xxii. 29), and must be redeemed by the offering of some animal, such as a lamb or a kid (Exod. xiii. 13, xxxiv. 20). The lamb or kid was sacrificed, and the blood was sprinkled on the doorposts[3]. By this means the first-born of Israel were saved, while all the first-born of the Egyptians perished. It is reasonable to suppose that in primitive times the first-born sons were offered to God, and that this offering symbolized the self-sacrifice of the individual, as in the story of Abraham, or the self-dedication of the clan or tribe. The human or animal victim was the symbol, not the substitute of the giver. I cannot agree with Prof. Robertson-Smith that the gift-theory leads to absurd results, since it does not follow that the life of his son is the most valuable gift that he can offer to his god[4]. True, the most valuable gift is the offering of oneself, but a first-born son would be the most precious

[1] Robertson-Smith, *op. cit.* p. 413 and Wellhausen, *Israelitische u. jüdische Geschichte* (1907), pp. 50, 99 n. 2.

[2] Robertson-Smith, p. 484, n. 1, and Well. *Proleg.* chap. iii. § 1, and Well. *Isr. u. jüd. Geschichte*, p. 100 (das Pascha, das Fest der Darbringung der männlichen Erstgeburten von Rindern und Schafen, ursprünglich auch von Menschen). Prof. Th. Nöldeke (*Zeitschrift der deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, XLII. (1888), p. 483) came to this conclusion, and Dr Frazer concurs with him (*The Dying God*, p. 179).

[3] The blood applied to the doorpost signified its application by the inmates. The significant part of the ceremony does not lie in the death of the victim, but in the application of its life or life-blood.

[4] Robertson-Smith, *op. cit.* p. 394; cp. Micah vi. 7.

symbol. Again, he says that to conclude from the consecration of the first-born that at one time the Hebrews actually sacrificed all their first-born sons is absurd. But primitive people are not rational, and we know that such wholesale sacrifice does persist among some savage tribes[1].

The sacrifice of a lamb, occurring in the spring, may have served the purpose of ensuring a good harvest, and so the connexion of the Passover with the Feast of Mazzoth (Unleavened Bread) was established[2]. The Passover probably existed in pre-Mosaic times, and therefore the Exodus was not the occasion of the feast, but *vice versa*[3].

It may now be convenient to compare briefly the main features of the Mithraic Bull-sacrifice and the Passover. The mythical and subsequently real slaying of the bull signified, and, perhaps, was supposed to procure, the fertilization of the earth. The bull was neither a sacrifice to Mithra, nor a symbol of him[4]. The blood of the bull

[1] Prof. Robertson-Smith, p. 484; cp. J. G. Frazer, *The Dying God*, p. 180. The natives of Rook, an island off the coast of New Guinea, used to kill all their first-born children. They prided themselves, however, on burying the infants instead of eating them. Among the Hindus the first-born has always held a peculiarly sacred position, especially if born in answer to vow to parents who have been long without offspring, in which case the sacrifice of the child was common. (Among the Hebrews Samuel was dedicated to the service of the temple, and Samson became a Nazirite.)

[2] Frazer, *G. B.* II. 48 n. In West Africa when a pestilence or attack of enemies is expected, it is customary to sacrifice sheep and goats, and smear the blood on the gateways of the village (Miss Mary H. Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa*, p. 454).

[3] Wellhausen, *Israel. u. jüd. Geschichte*, p. 99, n. 2: In der alten Form der Sage gilt indessen der Auszug nicht als Veranlassung des Festes, sondern umgekehrt das Fest als Veranlassung, oder doch als Vorwand des Auszuges (see Exod. x. 9). This is suggested by Prof. Wade also (*Old Testament History*, p. 148).

[4] Loisy, however, says: "La victime...a été d'abord la divinité

(which is the life) and its seed (which is the power of generation) gave new life to the earth. On the other hand, the Passover lamb was offered to God, as the symbol of the worshipper. The blood was applied to the doorpost, which meant the application of its life to the inmates, but the rest, no doubt, was poured out to God[1]. The offering of the lamb signified and represented the offering of a man's life, and this found its climax and fulfilment in the perfect offering and supreme self-sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. In Mithraism there is a mythical or material sacrifice: in Christianity we have a real and at the same time spiritual sacrifice. That is surely the vital distinction between the Christian gospel and the mysteries of Mithra and other nature-deities. The sober and impartial judgment of Prof. Cumont may be quoted on this point.

It was a grave cause of inferiority for Mazdeism to trust only in a mythical redeemer, and the unquenchable spring of religious emotions, which the preaching and passion of God sacrificed on the cross have caused to gush forth, has not flowed for the believers in Mithra[2].

même" (p. 196) and "Les taureaux sacrifiés chez Mithra étaient sacrifiés à Mithra." Still Mithra is only once called "the bull" in the Avesta (Mihir Yast, xxii. 86), and bulls can only have been sacrificed *to* Mithra when the original meaning of the rite had been forgotten.

[1] Cp. Exod. xxiv. 6.

[2] Cumont, *Textes et Monuments*, I. 342, and *Mystères de Mithra*, p. 164: Ce fut une cause grave d'infériorité pour le mazdéisme de ne croire qu'en un rédempteur mythique. La source intarissable d'émotions religieuses que la prédication et la passion du Dieu immolé sur la croix ont fait jaillir, n'a point coulé pour les fidèles de Mithra. Cp. Gasquet, *Essai sur le culte et les mystères de Mithra*, p. 138: Ce deus certus (le soleil) rassurait la raison, mais ne touchait pas le cœur. Jésus sanglant, cloué sur la croix, victime volontaire offerte pour le rachat de l'humanité, était une réalité autrement efficace et accessible.

The historical evidence for the existence of Jesus Christ has been severely criticized in modern times[1], but, when it is fairly considered, it is as good as the evidence for the existence of Buddha, Mohammed, and other founders of world-religions.

[1] J. M. Robertson, *Christianity and Mythology*; A. Drews, *Die Christusmythe*; cp. Loisy, *Les mystères païens*, p. 214: Une critique décidée à se satisfaire d'invraisemblables subtilités peut seule s'ingénier à ne voir qu'un mythe dans l'existence, la prédication et le crucifiement de Jésus.

CHAPTER III

ETHICS

THE ethics of Mithraism and Christianity are in some respects similar, but not by any means identical. Any religion of a spiritual kind is bound to promulgate a high code of ethics. There may be a high code of morality without any visible sign of religion, as in Confucianism, or a highly-developed religion combined with a low type of morality, as in Hinduism, but in a great and living faith religion and morality advance *pari passu*, and the one reacts on the other.

The general statement of Cumont is no doubt true that "Mithraism and Christianity both preached an imperative morality, held abstinence to be meritorious, and put abstinence, continence, and self-control in the list of virtues[1]." S. Reinach also says that Mithraism recommended continence, but he thinks that morality is independent of religion, and that every religion adopts and makes its own the morality of its time[2]. True, morality may be based on custom or taboo, but religion inspires and transforms these social sanctions.

[1] Cumont, *Textes et Monuments*, I.; cp. C. G. Jung, *Psychology of the Unconscious*, p. 80: "The meaning of these cults—I speak of Christianity and Mithraism—is clear; it is a moral restraint of animal impulses."

[2] S. Reinach, *Cultes, Mythes et Religion*, vol. II., La morale du Mithraisme, p. 230. He quotes with approval Anatole France, *Le Mannequin d'osier*, p. 318: Chaque époque a sa morale dominante, qui ne résulte ni de la réligion ni de la philosophie, mais de l'habitude.

The religious foundation of Mithraic morality is dualism[1]. There is a constant struggle between the spirit of evil and the spirit of good. It is this element of effort or, it may be said, pugnacity that commended it to the Cilician pirates and the Roman soldiers. In the same way, the life of a Christian, from his baptism, is conceived as a fight against the powers of evil. But in order to find out the origin of these moral ideas, it is necessary to return to primitive Mazdeism.

In the Avesta, Mithra is specially honoured as the god of truth. Mithra is truth-speaking[2], and hater of lies. Those who lie unto Mithra are sorely punished in this world and the next[3]. Mithra is associated with Rashnu (the genius of truth)[4]. The Persians taught their children to shoot straight and speak the truth[5]. Mithra is the god of contracts, and the contract between two friends and relations is twenty times more binding than between two strangers[6]. The breach of contracts is visited with terrible penalties, in this world and the next[7]. The contract should hold good with the unbeliever as well as with the believer[8]. The handgrasp of a Persian is the most certain guarantee of a promise[9].

[1] Toutain, *Les cultes païens dans l'empire romain* (*Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études*, vol. 25), chap. IV. 129; *contra* F. Legge (*Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, p. 232). The strict dualism, which set Ahriman in eternal and perhaps equal opposition to Ormuzd, seems to have been unknown before the Sassanid reform in 226 A.D.

[2] Mihir Yast, ii. 7; xxxv. 14.

[3] Mihir Yast, ix. 38; Vendîdâd, Fargard iv. 54.

[4] Mihir Yast, ix. 41 and xx. 79; Vend. Farg. iv. 54.

[5] Herod. I. 136, παιδεύουσι δὲ τοὺς παῖδας τρία μοῦνα, ἱππεύειν, καὶ τοξεύειν, καὶ ἀληθίζεσθαι; 138, αἴσχιστον δὲ αὐτοῖσι τὸ ψεύδεσθαι νενόμισται.

[6] Mihir Yast, xxix. 116.

[7] Vend. Farg. iv. 11, 49.

[8] Gasquet, *op. cit.* p. 107.

[9] Diodorus, quoted by Gasquet, p. 107.

Purity is held in high esteem by the Persians. The Vendîdâd is chiefly concerned with the question of ceremonial purity, but moral purity seems to be included in its injunctions.

Purity is for man, next to life, the greatest good, that purity that is procured by the law of Mazda to him who cleanses his own self with good thoughts, words, and deeds[1].

The youth of good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, goes to Paradise[2]. The followers of Mithra approved of continence and even virginity[3]. The exclusion of women from any active part in the mysteries deprived the cult of those who are generally the most devoted adherents of any religion, but it would at any rate stultify the charge against Mithraism, that it was effeminate or licentious[4]. On the other hand, its facile self-adaptation to other orgiastic cults ruined its reputation and corrupted its purity.

Lastly, though Mithraism laid stress on purity, it does not inculcate the love of one's neighbour[5]. It would, no doubt, encourage a brotherly spirit among its votaries, who were called Fratres or Consacranei[6]. But this would

[1] Vend. Farg. v. 21. Still Darmesteter explains this as meaning "him who performs *the rites of cleansing according to the prescriptions of the law.*"

[2] Gasquet, *op. cit.* p. 110, speaks of "*pureté* en *paroles*, en *pensées*, en *actions*." Yast, xxii. 11; xxiv. 58.

[3] Tertullian, *de praescr. haeret.* 40, (Mithra) habet et virgines, habet et continentes.

[4] It is very doubtful whether women were admitted to the Mithraic orders. Porphyry, *de Abst.* IV. 16, ὡς τοὺς μὲν μετέχοντας τῶν αὐτῶν ὀργίων μύστας λέοντας καλεῖν, τὰς δὲ γυναῖκας ὑαίνας (l. λεαίνας). (Loisy, p. 164. Tomb of a "lea" [quae lea jacet] at Tripoli in Africa which may be a Mithraic lioness.) Women received the taurobolium, but that was not a truly Mithraic rite.

[5] Gasquet, *op. cit.* p. 133.

[6] Cumont, *Textes et Monuments*, I. 339; Phythian Adams, *Mithraism*, p. 65; F. Legge, *op. cit.* p. 261. *CIL.* VI. 727, Soli

be only the limited brotherhood of a secret society or a masonic lodge. The Persian Yasna says "That one is an evil man, who is good to an evil man." Even the Jewish code restricts the love of one's neighbour to members of the Jewish community. But Christ, in teaching us to love our enemies, and in his Parable of the Good Samaritan, sets up a higher ideal, which indeed very few Christians have attempted to realize in private conduct or in national life. Whatever may have been the moral ideal of the Mithraic mysteries, Christ rises above them because not only did He preach a lofty ideal, but He practised it to the fullest extent in a real human life[1].

invicto *Mithrae* M. Aurelius cum Hermioneo et Balbino *fratribus* v(otum) s(olvit) f(eliciter).

[1] Loisy, *op. cit.* p. 357: Le Sauveur chrétien ressemble à tous les dieux de mystère, sans correspondre exactement à aucun d'eux; et il leur est supérieur à tous aussi bien par la définition métaphysique de son être que par la perfection morale de son caractère et l'idée morale de sa mission.

CHAPTER IV

LITURGY AND ORDERS

THE liturgies of the Mithraic mysteries, if they existed independently of the Persian Gâthas[1], have almost entirely disappeared. Firmicus Maternus quotes one verse of a hymn which refers to Mithra and his exploits with the bull,

Μύστα βοοκλοπίης, υἱὲ δέξιε πατρὸς ἀγαυοῦ[2].

Certain sacred names, of Oriental or Persian origin, such as Nabarze (Victorious, Invictus), and Nama Sebesio (Honour, Glory) have been preserved. However, a magical text, generally called the Ἀπαθανατισμός, has been claimed by Prof. A. Dieterich as a genuine Mithraic liturgy[3]. Prof. Cumont characterizes it rather severely as an utter rigmarole[4], and his judgment is accepted, in the main, by other scholars[5]. We differ with reluctance from an erudite scholar like Prof. Cumont, but we do not think that his criticism is quite fair. A careful examination of the text shows many traces of Mithraic terminology and doctrine.

In the preface to the incantation the mystic addresses the great god Helios Mithras, and prays that he, as an

[1] Date of the Gâthas may be fifth century B.C. (Darmesteter, Introduction, p. liii).

[2] Firmicus Maternus, *de Err. Prof. Rel.* v. 2 (some read συνδέξιε or ἐνδέξιε). Dieterich, *Die Mithrasliturgie*, p. 218).

[3] The papyrus, which contains this text, was written in the *fourth century* A.D. (Dieterich, *Die Mithrasliturgie*, p. 43).

[4] "Galimatias triple," Cumont, I. 42.

[5] Toutain, *op. cit.* p. 141; Legge, *op. cit.* p. 255.

eagle, may ascend to heaven[1]. The eagle is believed to be one of the highest Mithraic orders, of which we shall speak later. In the prayer itself the mystic speaks of the Sun-God his father[2]. The mystic has a vision of a young, well-favoured, fiery-haired god, whom he addresses as Helios[3]. Later on he sees a young god with shining face, golden hair, in a white tunic, with a golden crown and wide trousers, holding in his right hand the golden shoulder of a young bull[4]. Lastly the mystic exclaims, "Lord, I am reborn and depart being exalted, being exalted I die; being born by a life-giving birth I am dissolved into death and go the way that thou hast created, as thou hast appointed and made a sacrament[5]." It is surely possible that some sort of Mithraic liturgy was incorporated or interpolated into this magical formula, possibly to disguise its character, and save it from destruction by the Christian Church. As it stands, the text has a greater affinity to the Gnostic work Πίστις Σοφία than to any genuine Christian liturgy. The earliest form of a Christian liturgy is quoted by St Paul in his letter to the Corinthians[6]. We find a later form in the *Didache*, and in Justin Martyr's *Apology*. From that time the Christian liturgy assumed a definite form, and developed into the liturgies of the Eastern and the Western Church.

[1] Dieterich, *Die Mithrasliturgie*, p. 3 (2te Auflage, 1910).

[2] P. 6. l. 13, δίσκου, πατρός μου, θεοῦ; p. 8 (Dieterich). Legge suggests that σεμεσιλαμ=שֶׁמֶשׁ עוֹלָם or Eternal Sun (*op. cit.* p. 277).

[3] Dieterich, p. 10.

[4] Dieterich, p. 14, ll. 15–17. This, no doubt, is Mithra. The other figures he sees, seven goddesses of Fortune and seven rulers of the Pole, would appear to belong to Babylonian astrology. Τύχη or Fortune corresponds to the Persian Hvareno. Tiridates says to Nero σὺ εἶ μοι Μοῖρα καὶ Τύχη. Ἀθάνατος Αἰὼν (Dieterich, p. 4, l. 21) may be identified with Zarvan Akareno, Boundless Time.

[5] Dieterich, *Die Mithrasliturgie*, p. 14; sacrament=μυστήριον.

[6] 1 Cor. xi. 23 sq.

ORDERS

The problem of the Mithraic orders or grades is most interesting and most complicated. It is fairly certain that there were seven grades, but both the names and their meanings are doubtful. Jerome gives the complete list as Corax, [Gryphus (Cryfios)], Miles, Leo, Perses, Heliodromus, Pater[1]. A series of inscriptions from a Spelaeum at Rome provides us with a list of grades conferred by the head of them, the pater patrum or pater patratus[2]. They are Father (Patrica), Sun (Heliaca), the Hidden (Cryphios), Lion (Leontica), Persian (Persica) and (sacred) Crow (Hierocoracica). Sometimes the pater could be also priest (sacerdos)[3], and in that capacity would probably perform the sacrifice and recite the liturgy. At other times he would be also called sacred herald (hieroceryx)[4]. It would also appear that the highest grade was denominated eagle (ἀετός)[5].

Those who assumed the names of animals wore animal masks[6]; they beat their wings like birds, and imitated the

[1] Jerome, *Ep.* CVII. *ad Laetam*: Simulacra quibus Corax, Gryphus, Miles, Leo, Perses, Heliodromus, Pater initiantur. One reading is Helios, Bromios pater (= Dionysus), but this must be wrong.

[2] *CIL.* VI. 749–753 (Cumont, II. 93); Phythian Adams, *op. cit.* p. 72. The same man who attained the degree of Pater (358 A.D.) initiated his son as Corax (376 A.D.). Curiously enough the grade of Miles is omitted. Cumont (I. 315) says that the seven degrees of initiation correspond to the seven planetary spheres; Loisy denies that there is any such relation (Loisy, p. 173).

[3] *CIL.* VI. 2271, pater et sacerdos invicti Mithrae.

[4] *CIL.* VI. 500, p(ater) s(acrorum) et hieroceryx i(nvicti) M(ithrae);

[5] Cumont, II. 172, Inscription 549 (at Derbe), Λούκιος ἀνέστησε Τήλεφον καὶ Μάρκον καὶ Σέξτον καὶ ἑαυτὸν ἀετὸν καὶ Ἄμμουκιν Βαβόου τὸν πατέρα ἀετὸν τειμῆς χάριν; cp. *Die Mithrasl.* p. 2 (Preface), ὅπως ἐγὼ μοῦνος αἰητὸς οὐρανὸν βαίνω.

[6] Cp. Robertson-Smith, *op. cit.* p. 437. This was a survival of an old rite in which the wearing of the skin imparted the virtue of the animal. Herod. IV. 188, τὰς αἰγίδας τῶν ἀγαλμάτων τῆς

cries of crows or the roaring of lions (Ps.-Augustin. CXIV. *adv. paganos*, alii autem sicut aves alas percutiunt vocem coracis imitantes; alii vero leonum more fremunt).

[1] The Crow was the lowest grade for boys, as in the bull-myth the crow was the messenger of the Sun. The Cryphios wore a veil over his face, which apparently might be lifted[1]. The Soldier was enrolled in the service of Mithra. A crown was offered to him, which he refused, saying that Mithra was his crown[2]. [The Christians did not wear crowns in the festivals (Minuc. Felix, XXXVIII. 2) because the crown was the emblem of victory, and belonged to Christ Himself.]

The Soldier was dipped in water and marked on the forehead with a hot iron[3]. He had to practise some form of abstinence[4], and to undergo various trials of a difficult and dangerous nature[5].

Ἀθηναίης ἐποιήσαντο οἱ Ἕλληνες; cp. Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, 645, ἄρκτος ἢ Βραυρωνίοις (feast of Artemis).

[1] *CIL.* VI. 751, ostenderunt cryfios.

[2] Tertullian, *de Corona*, 15: Mithrae milite, qui coronam... monetur...a capite pellere dicens Mithram esse coronam suam; atque exinde nunquam coronatur...statimque creditur Mithrae miles, si dejecerit coronam, si eam in Deo suo esse dixerit.

[3] Tert. *de praescr. haeret.* 40: Tingit et ipse quosdam...expositionem delictorum de lavacro repromittit; Mithra signat illic in frontibus milites suos; cp. Gregory, *Or.* IV. *adv. Jul.* I. 70: τὰς ἐν Μίθρου **βασάνους** καὶ **καύσεις** ἐνδίκους τὰς μυστικάς. Prudentius speaks of a similar rite (*Peristeph.* X. 1076) in honour of Cybele or perhaps Osiris; cp. Lewis Spence, *op. cit.* p. 103. No bullock could be offered to the gods without the seal of the Sphragistae, an order of priests, stamped on it. Their impress is "A man upon his knees with his hands tied behind him, and a sword pointed at his throat."

> Quid cum sacrandus accipit *sphragitidas*
> Acus minutas ingerunt fornacibus;
> His membra pergunt urere, utque igniverint:
> Quancunque partem corporis fervens nota
> Stigmarit, hanc sic consecratam praedicant.

[4] Cp. Lucian, *Menippus*, 6, ἐπεὶ δὲ ἄλις εἶχε τῆς **προδιαιτήσεως** (preparation by diet).

[5] Nonnus calls them (Cumont, II. 27) κολάσεις. Pseud.-Aug.

The three lowest grades were servers (ὑπηρετοῦντες) and could not participate in the higher mysteries. The higher grades were participants or communicants (μετέχοντες). The Lion, whose name signified fire or a fiery nature[1], received a new purification. Honey, which was sacred in the eyes of the Persians and the magi of Asia Minor, was poured on his hands, and put on his tongue[2]. The Lions were allowed to share in the Mithraic feast or communion.

The Persian was, no doubt, intended to represent the race from which Mithraism took its origin. Honey was administered to him also, because he was an husbandman, and keeper of fruit[3]. He wears the Phrygian cap, peculiar to Mithra, on his head.

CXIV. alii autem, ligatis manibus intestinis pullinis, projiciuntur super foveas aqua plenas, accedente quodam cum gladio et irrumpente intestina supradicta, qui se liberatorem appellant.

[1] Tertull. *adv. Marc.* I. 13: Aridae et ardentis naturae sacramenta leones Mithrae philosophentur.

[2] Porphyry, *de antro nymph.* 15, καθαίρουσι δὲ τὴν γλῶτταν τῷ μέλιτι ἀπὸ παντὸς ἁμαρτωλοῦ. Lucian, *Menippus*, 6, ἔλουε κατάγων ...πότον γάλα καὶ μελίκρατον. Honey was sacred to Persians, Strabo, XV. 733 C, ἀποσπένδοντες ἔλαιον γάλακτι καὶ μέλιτι κεκραμένον. Appian (*Mithrid.* 66), Mithridates offers milk and honey and wine. Honey was supposed to be produced under the influence of the moon. *CIL.* III. 1002, Dianae *mellificae* sacrum. Bees were believed to come from a bull's carcase, βουγενεῖς μέλισσαι, *Anthol. P.* 9, 363. Ov. *Met.* XV. 364,

mactatos obrue *tauros*
Cognita res usu, de putri viscere passim
Florilegae nascuntur apes.

Cp. Judges xiv. 8, and Verg. *Georg.* IV. 284,

quoque modo caesis jam saepe juvencis
Insincerus apes tulerit cruor.

On the other hand, the offering of honey was forbidden in Hebrew sacrifice, Lev. ii. 11, "For ye shall burn no leaven nor any *honey* as an offering." Tertullian (*adv. Marc.* I. 14) refers to the Marcionites and mentions "*mellis* et lactis societatem, qua suos infantat." It was customary to put honey on the tongues of new-born children (Loisy, p. 181).

[3] Porph. *de antro nymph.* 15, ὅταν δὲ τῷ Πέρσῃ προσάγωσι μέλι ὡς

The two highest grades, Heliodromos or Sun-runner, and Pater or Father, represent respectively Helios and Mithra. The latter two are associated on the monuments, and the two grades are, so to speak, their human counterparts[1]. They took, as we shall see, the chief places at the Mithraic feast.

The seven Mithraic orders have been compared with the seven orders of the Roman Church. But, except for the number of the grades, the resemblance is very slight and superficial. The Corax might be compared with the Acolyte among the minor orders, and the Pater, Heliodromos, and Persian, might find a parallel in the Priest, Deacon, and Subdeacon of the Catholic Church. But the correspondence is quite fanciful and arbitrary[2]. Some writers, with greater want of scientific accuracy, have confused orders with sacraments, and have spoken of the seven sacraments of Mithraism when they were really referring to the seven grades. It remains to be seen whether the Mithraic rites and ceremonies can be worked up into a scheme which will bear some resemblance to the sacramental system of the Catholic Church.

φύλακι καρπῶν, τὸ φυλακτικὸν τίθενται...θεῶν τροφῆς ὄντος τοῦ μέλιτος. Honey was regarded as a preservative and the food of the blessed (Cumont, *Mystères de Mithra*, p. 133).

[1] Cumont, II. 18, n. 1 (inscription in Phrygia, published by Ramsay, *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 1883, IV. 420): *Ἀθάνατος Ἐπιτύγχανος Πίου τιμηθὶς ὑπὸ Ἑκάτης πρώτης, δεύτερον ὑπὸ* Μανουνδάου (*Ἡ*)**λιοδρόμου** *Διός, τρίτον ὑπὸ* **Φοίβου** *ἀρχηγέτου Χρησμοδότου ἀληθῶς δῶρον ἔλαβον.* Tertullian says that the summus pontifex (who presumably is the same as Pater) could only marry once, like the bishops of the primitive Church. *De praescript. haeret.* 40, Quid quod et summum pontificem in unius nuptiis statuit?

[2] Loisy, *op. cit.* p. 166. Les degrés de l'initiation mithraique ne se présentent pas du tout comme les différents grades d'un sacerdoce hiérarchisé (p. 176). Loisy compares the Cryphii to the class of adolescents who have arrived at the age of puberty, which for the Christians would be the time of confirmation.

CHAPTER V

SACRAMENTS

We have seen already that the Mithraic miles had to undergo certain trials before baptism. After this he would receive a mark upon his forehead, and would be admitted, on attaining the grade of Lion, to full communion.

The source of these rites of baptism and communion can be traced to the Mazdean religion. Zarathustra asks how the faithful man may drink the libations, which he offers to Mithra. Ahura Mazda answers: "Let them *wash* their bodies three days and three nights; let them undergo thirty strokes for the sacrifice and prayer unto Mithra, the lord of wide pastures. Let them wash their bodies two days and two nights; let them undergo twenty strokes, etc.[1]" Here it is a question of repeated lustrations[2], not of a single ceremony like baptism, which was never repeated unless the former administration was invalid or heretical. Some rite of washing was necessary before initiation in most of the mysteries[3]. But unless we can find any closer parallels, it must be supposed that Tertullian in the heat of controversy, exaggerated the resemblance between the Mithraic washing and Christian

[1] Mihir Yast, x. 122. The strokes with the Sraoshôkarana purged the worshippers from sin and made them fit to offer a sacrifice to Mithra.

[2] Cumont, *Mystères de Mithra*, p. 117.

[3] Cp. Toutain, *op. cit.* p. 137. In the mysteries of Isis the initiated took a bath (Apuleius, *Metamorph.* Bk XI: Stipatum me religiosa cohorte deducit ad proximas balneas). There was a bath in the Eleusinian mysteries, and a *lavatio* on March 27th at the feast of Cybele (Gasquet, *op. cit.* p. 75 and Loisy, p. 105).

baptism[1]. The latter, if not entirely original, had its source in the ceremonial washings of the Law[2].

Again the Mithraic feast finds its origin in the primitive Mazdean sacrifices. The two oblations, which were made in addition to animal sacrifices, consisted of darûn, draona (small cakes), and haoma (the juice of a plant). The darûn is said to be a little unleavened cake, slightly bigger than a crown piece. A piece of meat (myazda) was placed on the draona[3]; they were then consecrated in honour of the angels or of deceased persons, and given to those present to eat[4].

The Haoma is the juice of a plant, which is drunk by the worshipper. In the Rigveda it is called Soma, and personified as Lord and King[5]. In the Avesta Haoma is called a priest, and is regarded as offering sacrifice[6]. Haoma was of two kinds: one was the yellow or earthly Haoma; the other was the white Haoma or Gaokerena, by drinking which men will become immortal on the day of resurrection[7]. It was a beverage which was believed to confer on the faithful wisdom, power to fight demons, and immortality.

When, however, the Persian magi migrated to other countries, they could no longer obtain the plant. So in

[1] Tertull. *de baptismo*, 5: Nam et sacris quibusdam per lavacrum initiantur Isidis alicujus aut Mithrae; *de praescript. haeret.* 40: Tingit et ipse (Mithra) quosdam—expositionem delictorum de lavacro repromittit (and Porphyry, *de antro nymph.* 15).

[2] It is uncertain whether the tebilah or immersion of the Jewish proselyte is earlier than Christian baptism. That is the only close parallel (see *Encyclop. Biblica*, s.v. Proselyte).

[3] Vend. Darmesteter, Introduction, IV. lxix.

[4] Vend. Farg. v. Darmesteter, p. 56, n. 3.

[5] Rigv. Bk v. Hymn li. 12, Bk VI. Hymn lxxv. 18.

[6] Mihir Yast, xxiii. 88; Gos. Yast, iv. 17; Mihir Yast, x. 23; *Mithra* prepared the *Haoma* in a mortar studded with stars.

[7] Vend. Darmesteter, Introduction, lxix.

Cappadocia they substituted the moly (μῶλυ), and in the West the vine[1].

The Mithraic feast is depicted in two forms on the monuments. In one we find, so to speak, the original institution, in the other the commemorative celebration of the rite[2]. In the first Mithra and Helios sit at a banquet. Mithra raises a drinking-horn or ῥυτόν in his right hand, Helios holds a cup in his right hand[3]. After the banquet Helios takes Mithra with him in his chariot. Helios drives, Mithra behind him seizes his floating mantle and jumps on[4].

In the second there is the ritual commemoration of this feast of Helios and Mithra. We see in the middle two persons, probably the Pater and Heliodromos (as representing Mithra and Helios) reclining on cushions. Before them is placed a three-legged table, on which lie four little round breads, marked with a cross. On their right stand the Crow and the Persian holding out a drinking-horn to the Heliodromos: on their left stand the Lion and a mutilated figure (identified either as Miles or Cryphios) who hands another drinking-horn to the Pater. On either side of the three-legged table crouch two animals, a lion and a bull.

[1] Cumont, I. 147. Hermes gives μῶλυ to Odysseus, to protect him against the charms of Circe, *Od.* x. 305. The *vine* is depicted on some of the Mithraic monuments (on the back of the Heddernheim relief Helios hands an enormous bunch of grapes to Mithra. The vine was born from the blood of the primitive bull. Cumont, I. 197).

[2] Loisy, *op. cit.* p. 171.

[3] Cumont, II. 172. Osterburken Mon. 246, 11°.

[4] Mon. 245 c 3° (Neuenheim); cp. 251 d 8° (Heddernheim). Helios stretches out his hand to Mithra to take him on his chariot. This is the only parallel to the Ascension of Christ which we have, and that is not very close. Mihir Yast, xxxii. 124 (Mithra with his hands lifted up towards Immortality) does not refer to his Ascension, but to his exit from Paradise (Garonmâna).

It is not surprising that the Christians should have regarded this banquet as a caricature of their most sacred mysteries. Justin Martyr and Tertullian both refer to this banquet and ascribe its origin to diabolic imitation[1]. This argument may strike us nowadays as absurd. But on the other hand it is reasonable to suppose that the Christians would not have borrowed from the Mithraic mysteries and then complained of imitation. The psychological argument is more probable, that all religious nations, at some stage of development, will endeavour to establish some kind of communion between themselves and higher powers. In that case, the closer the origin of any two religions may be, the nearer will be the resemblances between them[2]. But it still remains to be proved that the differences are not as numerous and as fundamental as the similarities.

Apart from this, the circumstances and the words of the institution of the Christian Eucharist point back evidently to the Jewish Passover. The bread would be the unleavened cakes[3] used in the Jewish rite, and the

[1] Justin, *Apolog.* I. c. 66, ὅτι γὰρ ἄρτος καὶ ποτήριον ὕδατος τίθεται κ.τ.λ. But surely wine must have been mixed with the water. Tertull. *de praescript. haeret.* 40, celebrat et panis oblationem. *On diabolic imitation:* Justin, *Apol.* I. 66, ὅπερ καὶ ἐν τοῖς τοῦ Μίθρα μυστηρίοις παρέδωκαν γίνεσθαι μιμησάμενοι οἱ πονηροὶ δαίμονες. Tertull. *de praescript. haeret.* 40, a diabolo...qui ipsas quoque res sacramentorum divinorum idolorum mysteriis aemulatur; *de corona*, 15, Agnoscamus ingenia diaboli; *de jejunio*, 16, quam diabolus divinorum aemulator imitatur.

[2] Cumont (I. 341) seems to favour this view. "Resemblances do not suppose necessarily an imitation. Many of the resemblances between the Mithraic doctrine and the Catholic faith are explained by the community of their oriental origin."

[3] J. M. Robertson (*Pagan Christs*, and *Religious Systems of the World*, p. 214) says that the round cake in the Mithraic feast was called *mizd* or *myazd*, and that name was copied in the *mass*. We know that myazd = the holy meat placed on the draona. Dr Selwyn, with equal confidence, derives Mass from Mazzoth

cup would be the cup of blessing[1]. The wine was mixed with water in very early times[2]. This was the New Covenant, sealed by the blood of Christ. Just as the annual feast of the Passover reminded the Jews of the ancient sacrifice, so the Christian Eucharist was intended to be a continual memorial and representation of the sacrifice of Christ.

It has been suggested that St Paul, being born at Tarsus, must have been acquainted with the mysteries of Mithra, and may have imported from them ideas about baptism and communion into the Christian faith.

No doubt the worship of Mithra was prevalent in Cilicia in pre-Christian times, and we have a coin of Tarsus on which the figure of Mithra is engraven[3]. It is disputed by scholars whether Mithraism was well known at Tarsus or in Cilicia in the first century B.C.[4]

Still, the question remains, how much did St Paul know about them? Loisy says that St Paul was born at Tarsus, grew up there, and would probably have spent there most of the years which preceded his conversion[5]. That does not agree with the statement that St Paul was born in Tarsus of Cilicia but was brought up in Jerusalem at the

(*First Christian Ideas*, p. 216). Neither conjecture receives much support from scholars.

[1] The third cup at the Paschal feast was so called, 1 Cor. x. 16.

[2] Justin, *Apol.* I. 65, ἔπειτα προσφέρεται τῷ προεστῶτι τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἄρτος καὶ ποτήριον ὕδατος καὶ **κράματος**. Abercius, *Inscr.* v. 16, κέρασμα διδοῖσα μετ' ἄρτου. The Ebionites celebrated with water only (Epiph. *Haer.* 30), but they were unorthodox ascetics.

[3] Cumont, II. 189. Mithra on coin. Τάρσου μητροπόλεως. (Ahura Mazda appears on the coins of Tarsus in 386–380 B.C.)

[4] Cumont and Kennedy (*St Paul and the Mystery-Religions*, p. 114 n.) deny the importance of Mithraism at that period. H. Böhlig (*Die Geisteskultur von Tarsos*, pp. 16, 70) and Loisy, *op. cit.* (p. 323) think that the mysteries were well known.

[5] Loisy, *op. cit.* p. 333.

feet of Gamaliel[1]. But St Paul himself says that out of fourteen years after his conversion, he spent about ten or eleven years in the regions of Syria and Cilicia, and probably some part of that time was spent at Tarsus. By this time the centre of interest in Mithraism had shifted from Commagene and Tarsus to Rome. On the other hand, St Paul may have been acquainted with the Mithraic feast or the Eleusinian mysteries, and warned his fellow-Christians against them. "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot partake of the table of the Lord, and of the table of devils[2]." Both as a strict Jew, and afterwards as a Christian, St Paul would be irreconcilably opposed to any heathen rites and practices[3].

There are only two other rites of the Mithraic mysteries which bear any resemblance to the sacraments of the Catholic Church. After the ritual ablution, which acted as an expiation of sin, the Soldier received a mark on his forehead, probably made with a red-hot iron[4]. This may

[1] Acts xxii. 3.

[2] 1 Cor. x. 21; cp. Firmicus Maternus on the *banquet* of Attis (quoted by Loisy, *op. cit.* p. 110), "cibum istum mors sequitur semper et poena."

[3] Prof. Percy Gardner suggests that St Paul was influenced by the Eleusinian mysteries (*Origin of the Lord's Supper*, 1893), and that his account of the Last Supper was one of his ecstatic revelations. Mr J. M. Robertson argues that St Paul was practising a supper of which he had no Jesuine record (*Religious Systems of the World*, p. 209). But even if St Paul was not dependent on apostolic information, either of St Peter or St James (Gal. i. 18, 19), it is difficult to believe that he concocted the Christian rite out of his own head with the addition of a few heathen ideas.

[4] Tertull. *de praescript. haeret.* 40, (Mithra) signat in frontibus milites suos. Gregory, *Or.* IV *adv. Jul.* I. 70, καύσεις ἐνδίκους τὰς μυστικάς. Prudentius, *Peristeph.* X. 1077. In the cult of Cybele the operation was performed with red-hot needles.

Acus minutas ingerunt fornacibus;
His membra pergunt urere—

be simply like the sign of the cross at Baptism, but it can also be compared to the marking of the forehead with chrism at Confirmation, according to the practice of the early Church[1].

Again, there were various trials to be undergone by the soldier before or after baptism[2]. The object of these was to make the mystic holy and impassive[3]. This recalls the penances of the Mazdean religion[4]. Whether these trials were accompanied by a form of confession is uncertain. The ancient Persians recited the Patêt, or form of confession, which saved them from punishment in the next world but not from penalties in this[5]. There is no evidence that the worshippers of Mithra confessed their sins before communion, though they may have performed some kind of abstinence[6]. There is, therefore, only a slight and superficial resemblance to the Sacrament of Penance in the trials and austerities of the Mithraic mysteries.

Perhaps St John has some such rite in his mind where he speaks of the mark of the beast (Rev. xiii. 16).

[1] 2 Cor. i. 21; 1 John ii. 20, 27. The apostles may be only using a figure of speech.

[2] Nonnus calls them *κολάσεις*, and Gregory *τὰς ἐν Μίθρου βασάνους*.

[3] *ὅπως δείξειεν αὐτὸν ἀπαθῆ τινα καὶ ὅσιον*. The ideal to be attained was the Stoic *ἀπάθεια*.

[4] Yast, x. 122, "Let them undergo 30 strokes (with the Sraoshôkarana) for the sacrifice and prayer unto Mithra."

[5] Vendîdâd, Fargard iii. 20, 21; ix. 49 n. Gasquet (*Essai sur le culte et les mystères de Mithra*) quotes a hymn to the Sun of a penitential nature. "Je me repens de tous mes péchés, j'y renonce. Que je devienne comme cette lumière qui est haute et élevée!"

[6] *προδιαίτησις* (Lucian, *Menippus*, 6); cp. the Russian words, govyēt, govyenie = fasting or preparation for the Blessed Sacrament.

CHAPTER VI

ESCHATOLOGY—THE SOUL AND THE FUTURE LIFE

THE last, but not the least important point, on which Christianity and Mithraism can be compared is that of Eschatology. This may be explained as the doctrine of the last things, death, judgment, heaven and hell, or, in other words, the ultimate destiny of the human soul. No religion, not even Buddhism, is devoid of a doctrine of the soul and the future life. If Animism is the most primitive form of religion, then man believed from the first that all natural objects were animated by spirits like his own. Perhaps from the analogy of dreams, primitive man argued that his spirit was in some way independent of the body. Dream-visions of his friends or relations may have convinced him that men continued to exist beyond the grave[1]. This belief was usually expressed in the cult of the dead or ancestor worship[2]. According to our philosophic or psychological standpoint we may view this primitive belief as an entire delusion or as an imperfect comprehension of the truth. It may, however, be disputed whether dream-visions or ancestor-worship will adequately explain the idea of human survival[3]. The origin of any conception does not account

[1] Grant Allen, *Evolution of the Idea of God*, p. 24.

[2] Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Sociology*. "The worship of ancestors is the root of all religion."

[3] Lods, *La croyance à la vie future et le culte des morts dans l'antique Israël* (1906), p. 43: La notion de survie n'est suffisam-

for its subsequent development, or disprove its essential validity. In the case of Mithraism and Christianity, the doctrine of the soul and the future life is rooted in earlier Persian and Jewish beliefs.

First of all, we must consider the belief in a soul. The teaching of the Zend-Avesta is that there is a Fravashi in every being, "the inner power that maintains it and makes it grow and subsist[1]." Later on not only men, but even natural objects, like the sky and earth, etc., had each a Fravashi[2]. This would appear to be a recrudescence of animism. Still the Fravashis of Zarathustra and of the faithful, of Mithra and Saoshyant occupy the highest place in this cosmology. The souls of men, righteous and unrighteous, consciously survive. They go up above into the presence of the heavenly gods themselves[3].

The Fravashi was independent of the circumstances of life and death, an immortal part of the individual which existed before man and outlived him[4]. If this is so, the ancient Persians believed in the pre-existence of the soul. On the other hand, the impure soul is said to go into the bodies of animals. This view would be similar

ment expliqué ni par les apparitions des morts dans les songes, ni par le culte rendu aux ancêtres, mais il faut tenir compte de la relation interrompue d'affection qui subsiste entre le vivant et le mort aimé, et de la conviction instinctive que l'homme a de la puissance de la vie. Cp. Söderblom, *La vie future d'après le Mazdéisme*, p. 50.

[1] Darmesteter, *Zend-Avesta*, II. 179. Originally the Fravashis were the same as the Hindu Pitris, the everlasting and deified souls of the dead.

[2] Farvardin Yast, xxiv. Fire, sky, waters, earth, plants have their Fravashis; so have the Bull and Mãthra Spenta, the Holy Word.

[3] Vend. Fargard xix. 30; Yast, xxii describes the fate of the righteous and wicked souls after death (cp. Yast, xxiv. 8).

[4] Darmesteter, *Zend-Avesta*, I. Introduction, p. lxxiv, note.

to the doctrine of metempsychosis or reincarnation, as held by the Pythagoreans[1] and the Buddhists[2].

Like other beliefs of Mazdeism, the doctrine of the soul was modified by Chaldean influences. The reasons for the soul's coming into the world are different. Souls descended to this earth to animate the body of man, either by bitter necessity, according to the Chaldeans, or of their own will, to strive against the demons, as the Persians believed.

The soul in its descent passed through the seven spheres of heaven, each of which was attributed to a planet. Here again we can trace the influence of Babylonian astrology. Sometimes the descent is symbolized by a ladder, composed of eight doors one on top of the other, the seven first being formed of seven different metals[3]. Each door was guarded by an angel of Ormuzd, and only the initiated knew the right passwords.

On its return to heaven, the soul stripped itself of its passions and faculties[4], giving to the Moon vital energy, to Mercury greedy longings, to Venus its erotic appetites, to the Sun its intellectual capacities, to Mars warlike

[1] Zeller, *History of Greek Philosophy*, p. 71. He thinks, however, that Pythagoras took the doctrine from the Orphic mysteries, and that the Orphics obtained it from Egypt; *v.* Herod. II. 123.

[2] *Buddhist Suttas*, p. 153 (Prof. Rhys Davids). Buddha speaks: "This is my last existence. There will now be no rebirth for me!"

[3] Legge, *Forerunners of Christianity*, p. 257, thinks that Origen has got the order of the metals wrong. Copper should be associated with Venus, Tin with Jupiter, Iron with Mars, Silver with Moon, Gold with Sun, and Lead with Saturn (Origen, *contra Cels.* VI. 22). Origen says of the ladder, κλῖμαξ ἑπτάπυλος, ἐπὶ δὲ αὐτῇ πύλη ὀγδόη.

[4] The Hymn of the Soul (Prof. A. A. Bevan, *Texts and Studies*, vol. v. No. 3, 1897) found in the Apocryphal Acts of St Thomas, describes the soul as *stripping off the filthy garb*, which is no doubt the bodily passions (line 62 *a*). It is curious that the apostle is said to have been imprisoned by a king named *Mazdai* (cp. Mazdeism). The work may have been composed by the Syrian Gnostic Bardesanes (A.D. 154–222).

ardour, to Jupiter ambitious desires, to Saturn its lazy inclinations. Then it passed into the eighth heaven.

Some of these traditions were preserved and carried on by Mithraism. It is doubtful whether the belief in metempsychosis persisted[1]. But Origen refers the conception of the ladder to the Mithraic mysteries[2]. The mystic vision and ascent is described in the Mithraic liturgy, but this is, perhaps, rather an ecstatic experience than the final departure of the soul to God. In this ascent, Mithra acted as the guide of the soul (cp. Julian, Address to the Sun)[3]. We are told by a Christian writer that the Magi professed to smooth the way of the soul to heaven by commendatory prayers[4]. This, by itself, would be only a theory of individual salvation, such as the Eleusinian and the Orphic mysteries offered to the initiated.

The doctrine of the immortality of the single soul was completed by that of the bodily resurrection of the whole community[5]. The latter doctrine is enunciated in one passage of the Avesta, which relates the coming of Saoshyant[6]. "We worship the Fravashi of the holy

[1] Porphyry, *de Abstinentia*, IV. 16, (ψυχὰς) ἃς παντοδαποῖς περιέχεσθαι σώμασι λέγουσιν.

[2] Origen, *contra Cels.* (ut supra). The ladder may be taken as a symbol of spiritual progress or regression, *e.g.* Philo, *de Somniis*, I. § 23, οἱ δ' ἀσκηταὶ μεθόριοι τῶν ἄκρων εἰσὶν (καὶ) ἄνω καὶ κάτω πολλάκις ὡς ἐπὶ κλίμακος βαδίζουσιν ἢ ὑπὸ τῆς χείρονος ἀντισπώμενοι. The ladder dreamt of by Jacob and St Perpetua may be psychologically explained as the symbol of a spiritual aspiration towards God (*Psychoanalysis*, Bradby, p. 110).

[3] ἡνίκα ἂν ἐνθένδε ἀπιέναι δέῃ, μετὰ τῆς ἀγαθῆς ἐλπίδος **ἡγεμόνα θεὸν εὐμενῆ** καθιστὰς σεαυτῷ. Cumont, *Textes et Monuments*, II. 19.

[4] Arnobius (295 B.C.), II. 62: Magi spondent *commendaticias* habere se preces quibus emollitae nescio quae potestates *vias faciles* praebeant ad caelum contendentibus subvolare.

[5] Cumont, *Mystères de Mithra*, p. 121.

[6] Farvardin Yast, p. 220; cp. Yast, xix. 89, "When the dead shall rise, when life and immortality will come..."

Astvatereta, whose name will be the victorious Saoshyant and whose name will be Astvatereta. He will be Saoshyant (the Beneficent One), because he will benefit the whole *bodily* world; he will be Astvatereta (he who makes the bodily creatures rise up), because as a bodily creature and as a living creature he will stand against the destruction of the bodily creatures." Again it is stated that the man of Asha (righteousness) who has lived for Ahura Mazda will have a seat near him in heaven. Thence he will go out at the end of time, when the dead shall rise, and live a new and all-happy life on the earth freed from evil and death[1].

Perhaps it will not be irrelevant to note the references to this doctrine in Greek historians of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. Herodotus (490–424 B.C.) quotes a man called Prexaspes as saying to king Cambyses, "If indeed the dead rise up, expect thou (O king) that Astyages the Mede also will rise up again[2]." Again, Theopompus, the Greek historian (380–305 B.C.), is quoted by Plutarch (50 A.D.) and Diogenes Laertius (150 A.D.) as stating that the Persians believed in a future life, which probably implied bodily resurrection. Plutarch's statement is as follows: "Theopompus says that there will be 3000 years of strife and war between one of the gods and another

[1] Cp. the inscription of Antiochus of Commagene (69–34 B.C.): **σῶμα**...*πρὸς οὐρανίους Διὸς Ὡρομάσδου θρόνους* **θεοφιλῆ ψυχὴν πρόπεμψαν**, *εἰς τὸν ἄπειρον αἰῶνα* **κοιμήσεται** [quoted by Cumont, *Textes et Monuments*, II. 89]. This would not however exclude the possibility of a bodily resurrection at the end of time.

[2] Herod. III. 62. There seems to be a play on the words **ἀνεστέασι** and **ἐπαναστήσεσθαι**, which would correspond in English to the words resurrection and insurrection. Someone was suborned to impersonate the dead Smerdis, whom Prexaspes had killed by command of Cambyses. Prexaspes seems to deny the doctrine, while the Magi affirm it.

(Ormuzd and Ahriman?), and at last Death (Hades) will come to an end (ἀπολείπεσθαι) and men will be happy, not wanting food or casting a shadow; and the god who devised this will be at peace and rest awhile[1]." Diogenes Laertius quotes Theopompus as saying in the eighth book of his *Philippica* that according to the Magi, men will live again and be immortal[2].

The doctrine, which has been adumbrated in the Zend-Avesta, is described with full details in Bk xxx. of the Bundahesh, or the Original Creation[3]. At the coming of Saoshyant they prepare the raising of the dead. First the bones of Gâyômard (the first man) are raised up, then those of Mâshya and Mâshyoi (the man and woman succeeding him), then those of the rest of mankind. Afterwards, when all material living beings assume again their bodies and forms, then they assign to them a single class. Then is the assembly of the Sadvâstarân, where everyone sees his own good and evil deeds. They separate the righteous from the wicked; the righteous are for heaven, and they cast the wicked back to hell. Then the fire and halo melt the metal of Shatvaîrô; all men will pass into that melted metal and will become pure.

Saoshyant, with his assistants, performs a Yazisn ceremony in preparing the dead, and they slaughter the ox Hadhayôs in that Yazisn; from the fat of the ox and the white Hôm they prepare Hûsh, and give it to all men,

[1] Plutarch, *de Iside et Osir.* 47 C.

[2] Diogenes Laertius, *Prooemion*, § 9. Aeneas of Gaza (467 A.D.) makes the most definite statement, "Zoroaster foretells that there will be a time at which there will be a *resurrection* of *all the dead*: Theopompus knows the facts." But his testimony is very late.

[3] This book was compiled in the time of the Sassanid dynasty (226–651 A.D.), and its composition extended over several centuries.

and all men become immortal for ever and everlasting. Afterward Saoshyant and his assistants, by order of the creator Aûharmazd, give every man the reward and recompense suitable to his deeds; they convey him to paradise (vahist), and the heaven (garôdmân) of Aûharmazd takes up the body (kerp), as itself requires; Ormuzd brings the land of hell back for the enlargement of the world; the renovation arises in the universe by his will, and the world is immortal for ever and everlasting. Apparently death and hell are finally destroyed in the regeneration of the universe. Here the elements of eschatology, death, judgment, heaven and hell, are clearly presented.

In this eschatological scheme Mithra finds no place. We are therefore inclined to draw the conclusion that Mithra passed to the West, and took with him the doctrine of the immortality of the soul; Mazdeism, reformed by king Ardashir (226–240) and his Sassanid successors, continued to flourish on Persian soil, and developed the doctrine of physical resurrection. On the other hand Manî rejected the doctrine of bodily resurrection[1]. The Manichaean view was that the conjunction of the soul with the body was due to a mixture of the elements of Light and Darkness, which took place before the world was fashioned[2]. The souls of the righteous were freed at death from all contact with the material world; the other souls were purified by transmigration into plants, animals, or men[3].

In the West it was Mithra who judged the soul after

[1] Manî appeared at the court of Shahpoor I in 242 A.D., and returned thirty years later. He was flayed alive as a heretic by Bahran in 276 A.D.

[2] A. A. Bevan, *Hymn of the Soul*, Introduction, p. 4.

[3] Foakes-Jackson, *History of the Christian Church*, p. 150.

death; it was he who acted as guide to the faithful in their ascent to heaven, and who bestowed upon them immortality by the final Bull-sacrifice[1]. The mysteries represented and guaranteed this eternal life by the sacrifice of the bull and the sharing in the Mithraic feast[2].

JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN THEORIES

We must now examine the Jewish and Christian doctrines of the soul and the future life. The primitive belief of the early Hebrews seems to have been derived from some kind of ancestor worship[3]. The teraphim are believed to be images of ancestors[4]. This, rather than Animism, may be the basis of their belief in human survival. The problem is no doubt complicated by the uncertainty as to the date and composition of different parts of the Pentateuch. Still, we know that the Hebrews had a great respect for their ancestors, especially their forefather Abraham, and it is not too much to say that the title, "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," does presuppose the belief in the survival of these progenitors of the nation[5]. From this belief was developed by degrees the doctrine of individual immortality.

[1] Saddar, 1. 4 f. When the soul; on the fourth night, arrives at the head of the Kinvad bridge, the angel *Mihir* and the angel Rashnu make up its account and reckoning. Böklen, *Verwandtschaft der jüdisch-christlichen mit der parsischen Eschatologie*, p. 58. Modern Parsi orthodoxy still keeps Mithra as judge of the soul by the side of Rashnu and Arstat. Söderblom, *La vie future d'après le Mazdéisme*, p. 96.

[2] Cumont, *Mystères de Mithra*, p. 121.

[3] Dr R. H. Charles, *Eschatology* (Hebrew, Jewish, and Christian), p. 19. We may compare the Pitris of the Indians and the Latin Manes.

[4] Gen. xxxi. 19, 34, 35; Judges xvii. 5.

[5] This was anyhow the interpretation of our Lord, Matt. xxii. 32; Mark xii. 26.

The earliest view of human personality, held by the Hebrews, was that it consisted of soul and body[1]. The soul (nephesh) was the seat of feeling and intelligence, the body was the source of the lower and animal instincts. The soul left the body at death, and continued to exist in Sheol. The departed souls retained a certain, even abnormal knowledge of human affairs[2], and were consulted by the living. Sometimes they were regarded as semi-divine beings[3], but more often as feeble shades[4]. The soul was allowed by God to return to this life, as in the case of the sons of the widow of Zarephath and of the Shunammite woman[5].

According to a later view, human personality was composed of three elements, spirit (ruach), soul (nephesh), and body (basar). The spirit comes from God, and returns to Him at death[6]. The dead cannot return to this life[7], but still Job hopes that apart from the body he will see God[8].

[1] Gen. ii. 7 (nephesh chayah). It entered the body with the breath (neshamah).

[2] This may be the meaning of Yiddonim (knowing ones) translated as "wizards" (Lev. xix. 31, xx. 6; cp. Is. xix. 3). Cp. Lods, *La croyance à la vie future et le culte des morts dans l'antique Israël*: "Le mort, au fond de sa tombe, s'intéresse aussi à ce qui advient aux vivants, spécialement à ses descendants, et intervient parfois dans leur existence" (*e.g.* Rachel weeping for her children, Jer. xxxi. 15).

[3] 1 Sam. xxviii. 13. The witch of Endor gives the name of Elohim to the apparition of Samuel.

[4] They are called Rephaim (weak ones) in Ps. lxxxviii. 10; cp. Is. xiv. 9, xxvi. 14.

[5] 1 Kings xvii. 22; 2 Kings iv. 35.

[6] Eccl. xii. 7; Job xxxiv. 14 (spirit is here ruach).

[7] Job vii. 9.

[8] Job xix. 26, 27. The point at issue is whether mibĕsari (מִבְּשָׂרִי) means "in my flesh" or "out of my flesh." In one case the vision would be mystic, in the other, so to speak, beatific.

However the immortality of the individual was too limited, and the life in Sheol too vague and shadowy, to stimulate the hopes or kindle the enthusiasm of the whole community.

In the later years of the Jewish kingdom and during the exile, the hope of a new life for the nation went side by side with the hope of a future life for the individual. Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones expresses the hope of a national revival rather than any physical resurrection. On the other hand Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's doctrine of the responsibility of the individual for righteousness or sin suggests, if it does not imply, the possibility of a future life for the individual. The religious man cherished the passionate conviction, even if he could not prove it by rational arguments, that God would not allow his soul to perish[1], but on the other hand, the righteous individual and the righteous nation would be blessed together. There was, as Dr Charles expresses it, a synthesis of the two eschatologies, national and individual, in the doctrine of resurrection.

At this point we may enquire whether the Jews borrowed any features in their eschatology from the Persians. If we believe that God has revealed some aspects of divine truth to other nations besides the Jews, we should not hesitate to admit that the Jews may have borrowed some religious conceptions, or at least that they have been influenced in their own religious development by other nations. The only point at issue is the extent of this influence. At the same time it is psychologically conceivable that two nations should have arrived at similar results on independent lines. Then the question will arise, which of the two conceptions is the higher and

[1] Pss. xvi. 8–10, xlix. 14, 15.

purer, and the answer to this leads on to progressive revelation.

It will be remembered that the first party of exiles, who came back in 536 B.C. to Jerusalem, would not have had much time to imbibe Persian ideas, unless these were already current in Babylon[1]. But those who returned with Ezra in 458 and with Nehemiah in 445 would certainly have had greater opportunities of assimilating Persian eschatology.

We find traces of these ideas in Isaiah xxiv.—xxvii. and Isaiah lxv.—lxvi., which may belong roughly to the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. There is a general statement about the abolition of death. "He hath swallowed up death for ever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces[2]." But there is a more explicit statement about resurrection. "Thy dead shall live; my dead bodies shall arise...the earth shall cast forth the dead (Rephaim)[3]." There seems to be an intermediate state between death and the judgment. "They shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days they shall be visited[4]." Last of all, there appears the idea of new heavens and a new earth. "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth," and "The new heavens and the new earth shall remain before me[5]."

It is asserted that the first two passages of Isaiah teach

[1] Stave (*Einfluss des Parsismus auf das Judentum*, p. 60) doubts the possibility of the Jews getting to know about the Mazdean religion from Persia, but thinks that the peculiarities of the Mazda-worshippers must have been sufficiently known in Babylon.

[2] Is. xxv. 8; cp. Hos. xiii. 14.

[3] Is. xxvi. 19.

[4] Is. xxiv. 22. Not only the kings of the earth, but the heavenly host will be judged.

[5] Is. lxv. 17, lxvi. 22.

only a resurrection of the righteous, while the Avesta proclaims a general resurrection. Still the Yasnas do teach in one place that only the righteous escape death. "For the right-living man there is no death, nor for the valiant worker: it is only for the wicked[1]." Again, while there is a final judgment in Isaiah, the Bundahesh, which may represent an earlier tradition, describes a separation of the righteous and the wicked at the moment of resurrection[2], and afterwards a final judgment and recompense suitable to men's deeds. Lastly the creation of new heavens and a new earth finds a fairly close parallel in the final renovation of the universe, except that hell itself is abolished in the Mazdean eschatology[3].

In the second century B.C. we may notice a change in Jewish thought, which is reflected in their literature. Even after the exile the Jews had expected a national revival and the restoration of the kingdom in some form or other. But their defeat and oppression by Persians, Greeks, and Romans had nearly destroyed all their cherished aspirations. This change of feeling is shown in their literature. Prophecy gave place to Apocalypse. The prophets dealt in the main with Israel as a nation, and did not specially concern themselves with the future life of the individual. But the apocalyptic writers were chiefly interested in a spiritual kingdom and a future life. They reinterpreted unfulfilled prophecy in a new sense[4], and represented past

[1] Yasna xxix. 5.

[2] Yast xxii. describes the joy of the righteous and the sufferings of the wicked three nights after death.

[3] Söderblom, *La vie future d'après le Mazdéisme*, pp. 269, 270. "The ideal world of Mazdeism implies not merely the extinction of Hell, but there is no longer any difference between Heaven and earth."

[4] The Book of Daniel reinterprets the 70 years of Jeremiah as 70 weeks of years = 490 years. Enoch (lxxxiii.–xc.) takes the period

or present history in a symbolic form. The early stories of Genesis were transformed into eschatological speculations[1]. Still the aim of the apocalypses was essentially ethical. God reigns, and righteousness will ultimately prevail.

It would be a difficult, and perhaps unprofitable task to review all the apocalyptic works which were written in the second and first centuries B.C., but one or two representative books may be selected. The Book of Daniel is the first of the Apocalypses, and the Book of Enoch, which is a composite work, comes second in date and importance.

The Book of Daniel (168 B.C.) teaches the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked. "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt[2]." But while in Mazdeism the resurrection is universal, it is limited in Daniel to the martyrs and apostates. In Daniel Sheol is the intermediate abode of saints and apostates[3]; in Mazdeism the intermediate abode of the righteous or wicked is heaven or hell. The judgment in Daniel is given to the saints at the beginning of the kingdom[4],

to denote 70 successive reigns of the 70 angelic patrons of the world.

[1] The creation of the world in 6 days = 6000 years. Then there is a rest of 1000 years.

[2] Dan. xii. 2.

[3] According to the later school of Shammai there was a third class in Sheol, whose merits and sins were balanced. They are placed in purifying fire, and move in it till they rise out of it purified (perhaps this is a Haggadic interpretation of Zech. xiii. 9). In the Persian Gâthas there is a state (Hamâstagân) intermediate between heaven and hell for those souls whose good and evil deeds are exactly balanced (Yasna xxxiii. 1); see Stave, *Einfluss des Parsismus*, and Söderblom, *La vie future d'après le Mazdéisme*, pp. 125–128.

[4] Dan. vii. 22, 26.

but in Mazdeism the judgment takes place after the resurrection.

The first part of the Book of Enoch (chaps vi.—xxxvi.) (before 170 B.C.) asserts that there are three divisions in Sheol, the first for the righteous, the second for the wicked who have died without suffering retribution in this life, the third for those who have met with retribution in this life. The righteous shall eat of the tree of life. The second class of wicked will be tortured till the day of judgment. Then they will be raised, in order to be transferred to Gehenna. The third class will not be punished in the day of judgment, nor will they be raised from Sheol[1].

Enoch lxxxiii.—xc. (166–161 B.C.) tells us that only the righteous dead are raised, but the apostate Jews will be judged and cast into Gehenna[2].

In the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (109–106 B.C.), especially the Testament of Benjamin, a general resurrection of the nation is affirmed. "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob rise again on the right with joy....Then will all also rise again, some to glory, and some to shame[3]." On the other hand the Book of Jubilees (105 B.C.) seems to teach the immortality of the righteous alone. "Their bones shall rest in the earth, and their spirits will have much joy[4]." The judgment comes at the close of the Messianic Kingdom.

The other portions of the Book of Enoch (xxxvii.—lxxi., xci.—civ.) belong to the first century B.C.

Enoch xci.—civ. proclaims a resurrection and future blessedness for the righteous, while torment and final

[1] Enoch xxii. 9.
[2] Enoch xc. 26, 30–32. The righteous and the wicked are symbolically represented as sheep.
[3] Test. Benjamin x; cp. Dan. xii. 2.
[4] Jubilees xxiii. 31.

annihilation are reserved for the wicked. "The righteous will rise again from the sleep of death[1]." "The spirits of you who have died in righteousness shall live and rejoice, and their spirits shall not perish[2]." The righteous will shine as the stars, and have great joy like the angels[3]. The first heaven shall disappear and pass away, and a new heaven will appear[4]. On the other hand, the souls of the wicked shall be made to descend into Sheol, and they shall be wretched in their great tribulation[5]. After the great judgment, the wicked shall be slain in Sheol[6].

"The Visions of Enoch" (xxxvii.—lxxi.) is believed to be the latest part of the book, and comes nearest to the beliefs of the New Testament. The Son of Man appears before the Ancient of Days, and He is the judge of righteous and wicked[7]. He will sit on the throne of His glory, and the sum of judgment will be given to Him, the Son of Man[8]. He will recall to life those that are in Sheol and Hell[9]. Heaven and earth will both be transformed[10]. The righteous will be rewarded, and the wicked punished and finally destroyed. There is a garment of life and glory for the righteous[11], but there is a deep valley with burning fire, into which the kings and mighty ones of the earth will be cast[12].

Two other works may be briefly noticed, the Psalms of Solomon, and the 2nd Book of Maccabees. The Psalms of Solomon (70–40 B.C.) teach the resurrection of the righteous and the destruction of the wicked. "They that fear the

[1] Enoch xci. 10, xcii. 3.
[2] Enoch ciii. 4.
[3] Enoch civ. 2, 4.
[4] Enoch xci. 16.
[5] Enoch ciii. 7.
[6] Enoch xcix. 11.
[7] Enoch xlix. 4, l. 4.
[8] Enoch lxix. 27.
[9] The word for Hell = Abaddon.
[10] Enoch xlv. 4, 5.
[11] Enoch lxii. 15.
[12] Enoch liv. 1, 2.

Lord shall rise unto life eternal[1]," but "the inheritance of the wicked is destruction and darkness, and their iniquities pursue as far as Hades beneath[2]." According to the 2nd Book of Maccabees (100–40 B.C.), the righteous will have an eternal renewal of life, but the wicked will have no resurrection unto life[3]. The resurrection would be of a physical nature[4].

We have now traced the beliefs of the Jews about the soul and the resurrection and the last things from the earliest times till the time of Christ. By that time these beliefs were, so to speak, current coin. The Pharisees, who were the successors of the Chasidim[5] of the Maccabean period, believed in the resurrection and the immortality of the soul. The Sadducees, who may have traced their origin to Zadok the priest, retained the old tradition, and claimed that the theory of a future life could not be found in the Law[6]. The Pharisaic doctrine is definitely described by Josephus[7]. In the first passage he says, "Souls have an immortal vigour, as they (the Pharisees) believe. Under the earth there will be rewards and punishments for those who have practised good or evil. The latter will be detained in an everlasting prison, but the former will be capable of living again." In the second passage he

[1] Ps. Sol. iii. 12. [2] Ps. Sol. xv. 10; cp. iii. 11.

[3] 2 Macc. vii. 9, 14. The righteous go straight to Hades after death (vi. 23), but it is only an intermediate state.

[4] 2 Macc. vii. 11.

[5] The name meant "pious" or "kind." They were strong Nationalists.

[6] We are told that Gamaliel proved the Resurrection in answer to the challenge of the Sadducees from the Law, the Prophets and the writings (Deut. xxxi. 16; Is. xxvi. 19 and Cant. vii. 10); and when they did not allow these proofs, he convinced them by Deut. i. 8 or Deut. iv. 4 (Sanh. 90*b*) (Bacher, *Agada der Tannaiten*, I. 87).

[7] *Antiq.* xiii. 1, 3; *Bell. Jud.* ii. 8, 14.

says, "Every soul is indestructible, but only the soul of the good passes into another body, but those of the wicked are punished with everlasting punishment[1]."

It was in this atmosphere of religious ideas that our Lord lived, and St Paul and the other apostles wrote and worked.

THE TEACHING OF CHRIST

There can be no doubt that Christ taught the immortality of the soul or spirit of man. "Fear not them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul[2]." Or again He emphasized the infinite value of the human soul. "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul[3]?" He warned men in the parable of the Rich Fool of the folly of looking after material things and neglecting their souls[4]. It is surely hypercritical to argue that our Lord meant only the principle of life which we have in common with the beasts, and not a self-conscious, immortal personality. Sometimes He spoke of the human spirit. "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak[5]." The human person takes his origin from God. "That which is born of the spirit is spirit[6]." Christ implies that the spirit is the eternal principle in human personality when He says, "The spirit quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing[7]." Even if we admit that these are not the very words of Christ, it is only reasonable to suppose that the Evangelists based their words on His teaching.

[1] It is not clear whether this is the doctrine of reincarnation in a material body, or the assumption of a spiritual body, but probably the latter view is correct. Some Pharisees believed only in a spiritual resurrection: the souls would rise into the sphere of incorporeal blessedness (Canon Glazebrook, *The Letter and the Spirit*, p. 78).

[2] Matt. x. 28.
[3] Matt. xvi. 26; Mark viii. 36.
[4] Luke xii. 19.
[5] Matt. xxvi. 41.
[6] John iii. 6.
[7] John vi. 63.

Christ took the current belief in the resurrection, and gave to it a higher and wider significance. He refuted the Sadducees out of the Law, in which they trusted, by showing that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob must be living in the sight of God. What to the pious Jew was a remote hope, was to Him a present fact. When Martha makes the pathetic, almost sceptical, confession, "I know that he will rise again at the last day," Christ reassures her with the words, "I am the Resurrection and the Life."

Some scholars attempt to prove that Christ taught only a resurrection of the righteous. They refer to His argument with the Sadducees, but surely it is not suggested that only those who are like righteous Abraham will rise again. It would be more plausible to argue from His teaching about generosity towards the poor that He believed only in a resurrection of the just[1]. But in the parable of the Sheep and the Goats He affirms that the righteous will go away into eternal life, and the wicked into everlasting punishment[2], and, according to St John, He teaches that they that have done good shall come forth unto the resurrection of life: and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment[3]. After all, Christ is the living prototype and pledge of the resurrection of all men.

In His general teaching about eschatology, Christ is content to use the signs and figures common to all apocalyptic literature, but He inspires them with a new meaning and force by His application of them to Himself. If we can strike the mean between the elimination and exaggeration of the eschatological teaching of Christ, we

[1] Luke xiv. 14; cp. Luke xx. 35 ("All live unto him"). Still the meaning may only be that the righteous shall rise first.
[2] Matt. xxvi. 46. [3] John v. 29.

shall come to the conclusion that He preserves the essential facts, but invests them with an ethical and spiritual character.

The first of the four last things, death, is accepted as a fact, but robbed of its terror and bitterness. Christ compares death with sleep[1], and affirms that the faithful believer will not feel the bitterness of death[2]. He goes so far as to say that for the believer there is no real death[3]. Eternal life begins in this, and continues in the next world[4].

Judgment, too, is regarded partly as present, partly as future. "This is the judgment, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil[5]." Still, our Lord generally refers the day of judgment to the end of the world. He Himself will be the judge[6]. Men will be judged by Him not on their professions, but on their deeds[7]. Judgment will be lenient or severe according to a man's knowledge and opportunities[8].

Heaven is simply described as the eternal abode of God the Father and the angels, and the final reward and resting-place of the blessed. The departed, both good and wicked, rest in an intermediate state till the last judgment, and the possibility of moral change is not excluded[9].

[1] Mark v. 39; John xi. 11; cp. Dan. xii. 2.
[2] John viii. 52; cp. Matt. xvi. 28; Mark ix. 1; Luke ix. 27.
[3] John xi. 25, 26.
[4] John iii. 36, xvii. 3.
[5] John iii. 19. This may, however, be the Evangelist's comment on our Lord's words.
[6] Matt. xxv. 31; John v. 22, 27.
[7] Matt. xxv. 40, 45, vii. 23; Luke xiii. 27.
[8] Luke xii. 47, 48.
[9] Luke xvi. 22, 23, 27. This state is called Hades, or Abraham's bosom, or Paradise (Luke xxiii. 43).

Even in Heaven there will be degrees of blessedness and opportunities for spiritual progress[1].

With regard to Hell, we are bound to speak with great reserve and caution. It cannot be denied that our Lord does definitely mention, on two or three separate occasions[2], Hell or Gehenna as a place of punishment. The points at issue are whether the torment is physical or mental, whether the punishment is vindictive or remedial, whether the duration is everlasting or merely future. In spite of what may be urged to the contrary, we agree with Dr Charles when he asserts that the punishment is spiritual only[3]. Secondly, if the rich man repented of his selfish life, there was at least a presumption in favour of his being finally saved[4]. Lastly, our view of the duration of future punishment will depend on our conception of the character and purpose of God. We cannot believe that the all-wise God will allow His purpose to be finally thwarted, or that the all-loving God, or His saints, will take pleasure in the torments of the wicked[5]. The only two alternatives consistent with Divine wisdom and love are either annihilation or universal salvation.

[1] John xiv. 2.

[2] Matt. v. 22; x. 28 (cp. Luke xii. 4); xviii. 9 (cp. Mark ix. 47).

[3] Luke xii. 5. Only the *soul* is cast into Gehenna; cp. Matt. v. 29, 30. Eye and hand are symbolical of certain desires, so *the whole body* may be taken symbolically.

[4] Luke xvi. 27; cp. 2 Pet. iii. 9.

[5] The Assumption of Moses, x. 10 (written by a Pharisee, 7–27 A.D.) suggests possibly that the punishment of the wicked will give joy to the righteous. "And thou shalt look from on high and see thy enemies in Ge(henna), and thou shalt recognize them and rejoice, and thou shalt give thanks and confess thy Creator" (בני may be an abbreviation for בני חנם, but the reading is doubtful). Still even this Jewish work is superior to the indecent and unchristian gloating of Tertullian (*de Spectaculis*, 30).

Dr Stanton remarks justly:

> It is right that we should bear in mind what may be the effect of a perfectly righteous indignation against sin; but it is impossible for us to understand how such a sight could be compatible with heavenly happiness[1].

It may appear superfluous to argue whether the teaching of Christ has been in any way derived from Persian sources. If it has been proved that the Book of Daniel and other apocalyptic writings were only remotely influenced by Mazdeism, and that the similarities, such as they are, may be equally well explained by parallel development of religious conceptions, this argument will apply with greater force to the Gospels. From the purely human standpoint it may be said that Christ was a truly original teacher, and only adopted Jewish beliefs in order to elevate and purify them from materialistic accretions. Nor do we think that the historical Christ of the Gospels or the heavenly Christ of the Book of Revelation bears any striking resemblance to Mithra, though certain symbols of Christ, "Lamb," "Rock," may be approximated to attributes of Mithra and others[2]. We know that Mithra was represented as the Judge in later Persian

[1] Stanton, *Jewish and Christian Messiah*, p. 344. He points out earlier that the language used about future punishment in the Rabbinic writings is vague, and admits or even encourages the interpretation that a speedier or later annihilation of the wicked is contemplated (p. 337).

[2] Mr Robertson asserts that, before the Gospels were written, Jesus as "Lamb" was assimilated to Mithra in respect of (*a*) seven spirits and seven stars (cp. Rev. i. 4, 16), (*b*) symbol of Rock (1 Cor. x. 4), (*c*) Mystic keys borne by the Time-God in his mysteries. Still he admits that in all three cases there seem to have been ancient Judaic myths to proceed upon (cp. *Pagan Christs*, p. 338). But the evidence is too slight to bear strict examination, and even then a superficial resemblance in symbolism does not prove identity of origin.

literature[1], but on the other hand we are inclined to think that in the Mithraic mysteries was taught not the resurrection of the body, but the immortality of the soul.

Some scholars, however, have urged that St Paul, as a native of Tarsus, must have been influenced by Mithraic doctrines[2]. We are not concerned to deny that these doctrines may have been known and propagated at Tarsus in the life-time of St Paul. Loisy too says that "neither the general doctrines of the Persian religion nor Ormuzd, nor Mithra nor the existence of his mysteries were unknown at Tarsus in the time of Paul[3]." But even if this be granted, the connexion between the Mithraic doctrines and St Paul's teaching is very dubious. The questions of the name of Mediator and of the Sacraments have been already discussed, so no further reference to them is needed. Other instances, given by Herr Böhlig, prove very little. The word δόξα is compared with the Persian Hvareno (Glory), which was given to Mithra, and many heroes also, including Zarathustra and Saoshyant[4]. It is no more a special attribute of Mithra than of anyone else. Again the antitheses of light and darkness, truth and lies, which are the foundation of the ancient Persian religion, are more characteristic of the teaching of St John than of St Paul[5].

[1] The reference to Mithra in Vend. Farg. xix (cp. Yast xxii) is indefinite. After the soul has waited three nights, "the dawn appears, and brightens up, and makes *Mithra*, the god with beautiful weapons, reach the all-happy mountains, and the sun is rising." The righteous souls pass on the Kinvad bridge to Heaven, while the wicked souls are dragged off by the fiends to hell (Yast xxiv. 52). Mithra is associated with Rashnu (genius of righteousness), but his functions are not described.

[2] H. Böhlig, *Die Geisteskultur von Tarsos mit Berücksichtigung der paulinischen Schriften.*

[3] Loisy, *Les mystères païens, etc.* p. 323.

[4] Avesta, Yast xix. Böhlig, *op. cit.* p. 99.

[5] Böhlig, *op. cit.* p. 103.

It is altogether more probable that St Paul inherited his ideas about the Resurrection from his teacher Gamaliel and the other Pharisees, than that he derived them from Mithraism. There are two Jewish apocalypses which fall within the first half-century or so of the Christian era, which may have influenced the thought of St Paul; but on the other hand he and the writers of these apocalypses may have drawn from a common source. These works are the Secrets of Enoch (up to 50 A.D.), and the Greek Apocalypse of Baruch (60–100 A.D.)[1].

In the Secrets of Enoch we find the idea of seven heavens, which are probably presupposed by St Paul, when he speaks of being caught up to the third heaven, or paradise[2]. This conception of seven heavens is first found in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (109–106 B.C.)[3]. It bears some slight resemblance to the seven-gated ladder (κλῖμαξ ἑπτάπυλος) of Mithraism, mentioned by Origen[4]. The Ascension of Isaiah, which probably belongs to the first century A.D., mentions the coming of the Messiah or Beloved from the seventh heaven[5]. The Book of the Secrets of Enoch agrees with St Paul in saying that Paradise is in the third heaven[6]. Enoch was, by a special privilege, raised to the seventh heaven, for the third heaven is the final abode of the righteous[7]. The

[1] Dr Stanton (*Jewish and Christian Messiah*, p. 75) puts the date of this work soon after the capture of Jerusalem, 70 A.D.

[2] 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4.

[3] Testaments of Twelve Patriarchs, Levi iii. Levi sees three heavens and then the angel promises to show the other four.

[4] Origen, *contra Cels.* 21. Origen emphatically denies that there is any similar Christian doctrine. οὐδαμοῦ τῶν γνησίων καὶ θείων πεπιστευμένων γραφῶν ἑπτὰ εἴρηνται οὐρανοί (23 end).

[5] Ascensio Isaiae, iii. 13.

[6] Secrets of Enoch, viii. But the Mohammedan Paradise (al Jannat) is in the seventh heaven.

[7] Secrets of Enoch, lv. 2.

Greek Apocalypse of Baruch describes the seven heavens with much detail[1]. The Pharisees and St Paul may have derived this belief from an Haggadistic interpretation of some such phrase as the heaven of heavens[2].

Again, the "Secrets of Enoch" denies the resurrection of the flesh, but affirms that there is a spiritual body. "The Lord said to Michael: Go and take from Enoch his earthly robe, and anoint him with my holy oil, and clothe him with the raiment of my glory." The two robes may reasonably be interpreted as the natural and the spiritual bodies. It is also asserted in the Secrets of Enoch that souls were created before the foundation of the world[3].

The Syriac Baruch, on the other hand, follows the same line of teaching as St Paul. To the question, "In what shape will they come?" it answers, "The earth will restore the dead, making no change in their form[4]." They will then recognize one another, and the last Judgment will follow. Afterwards their appearance will change. They will be changed into every form that they desire, from beauty unto loveliness, and from light to the splendour of glory[5].

It may be presumed that St Paul had accepted the

[1] Greek Baruch. Only five are definitely mentioned.

[2] Cp. 1 Kings viii. 27; 2 Chron. ii. 6, vi. 18 (building of temple); Nehem. ix. 6; Ps. cxlviii. 4.

[3] Secrets of Enoch, xxiii. 5. The Book of Wisdom teaches the pre-existence of the soul, but neither that book nor Philo affirms the resurrection of the body. No doubt they were influenced by Greek philosophy. Our *σῶμα* is our *σῆμα*, and death is the separation of soul from body; cp. Philo, *de Fuga et Inventione*, III. 122, *ὅρος ἀθανάτου βίου...ἔρωτι...θεοῦ* **ἀσάρκῳ καὶ ἀσωμάτῳ** *κατεσχῆσθαι.*

[4] Syr. Baruch, l. 1.

[5] Syr. Baruch, li. 3, 10. The following passage recalls the language of St Paul, "When the Messiah returns in glory, then they all who have fallen asleep in hope of him will rise again" (xxx. 1).

Pharisaic doctrine of resurrection before he was converted to Christ. His conversion must have produced a fundamental change in his views. Instead of believing in a resurrection in some far distant period, he believed that the resurrection would take place on the return of Christ, which was very near.

Again there is no reason why we should not believe that St Paul changed his views on the resurrection from the time of his conversion to the day of his death. That is the opinion of many modern scholars, and we are inclined to agree with them[1]. But it is improbable that St Paul changed his views so entirely, that he ceased to believe in a resurrection even of a spiritual body, and believed only in the immortality of the soul.

St Paul's doctrine of the soul appears to be similar to the later Jewish view, according to which man consisted of three elements, body, soul, and spirit. In the rest of the New Testament soul and spirit are practically synonymous, except that the spirit is the higher side of the soul, and the bearer of personality after death. It is asserted that St Paul distinguishes more sharply between ψυχή and πνεῦμα. It is true that ψυχικός (natural) is distinct from πνευματικός (spiritual). But it is not so certain that the distinction can always be maintained. At any rate the soul is the supreme function and vital principle of the body. But the spirit definitely represents the higher nature of man, or the human personality which can have communion with the Divine Spirit. In other words, the soul includes all forms of sensuous life, while the spirit represents the higher elements of personality. We do not believe that St Paul is in fundamental dis-

[1] *E.g.* Dr Charles, *Jewish and Christian Eschatology*, and Canon Glazebrook, *Letter and Spirit*.

agreement with the teaching of the rest of the New Testament and of modern psychology.

Again, we may find that the teaching of St Paul about the resurrection body is similar in some respects to the earlier teaching of the Avesta or the later teaching of the Bundahesh. But, as far as we can see, no connexion can be traced between the two systems of thought.

Four stages can be observed in St Paul's doctrine of the resurrection, viz. (i) 1 and 2 Thessalonians, (ii) 1 Corinthians, (iii) 2 Corinthians and Romans, (iv) Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians[1].

Even in the last stages of his ministry St Paul believed that the Parousia would take place in his life-time[2]. But as time went on, circumstances must have forced him to change his mind as to the number who would be alive at the second coming of Christ. The questions of the state of the departed between death and the second coming, and of the resurrection body, became more important.

When St Paul writes to the Thessalonians, he says that the dead in Christ will rise first, presumably with some kind of glorified or spiritual bodies, and the living will be caught up with them to meet the Lord in the air[3]. The wicked will not rise, but will be punished with eternal destruction[4]. The judgment will coincide with the resurrection[5].

Very soon, however, the Christians at Corinth began to speculate on the nature of the resurrection body, and St Paul had to give them a satisfactory explanation.

As before, the Parousia and Final Judgment take place

[1] The Epistle to the Galatians refers only to our Lord's resurrection, not to the resurrection body of Christians (Gal. i. 1).
[2] Phil. iv. 6. [3] 1 Thess. iv. 10. [4] 2 Thess. i. 9.
[5] 2 Thess. i. 8, 10. That day is the day of judgment.

simultaneously[1]. Only the righteous are raised, for the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God[2].

When the righteous are raised at the Parousia, in what body do they come? St Paul tries to explain the nature of the resurrection body by the analogy of the seed sown in the earth, but even then the interpretation is not free from difficulties. Does the sowing of the seed mean the placing of the soul in the world, or the laying of the body in the grave[3]? Further, St Paul says that, in the case of the seed, "thou sowest not that body which shall be—but God giveth it a body[4]." That appears to mean, "The soul or vital principle is set free at death from the old, natural body, and God gives it a new body, a spiritual form." Anyhow, St Paul does not believe in a pure immortality of the soul, but thinks that the soul is invested with a form of some kind[5]. At any rate, the bodies

[1] 1 Cor. i. 7, 8. Revelation = Parousia.

[2] 1 Cor. vi. 9; cp. Bundahesh, xxx. 7, 12. All rise up. But they set the righteous apart from the wicked; and then the righteous are for heaven, and they cast the wicked back to hell.

[3] Dr Charles argues for the former view, and compares 4 Ezr. v. 43: qui seminati sunt super eam = those sown on the earth (at the beginning of this life).

[4] Again, "it is sown in corruption" may refer to the present life of man; cp. Rom. viii. 21; 2 Cor. iv. 16. "Flesh and blood" corresponds to corruption in 1 Cor. xv. 50. Creation is under the sway of corruption (φθορά) (Kennedy, *St Paul's Conception of the Last Things*, p. 334).

[5] That appears to be the Pharisaic and Rabbinic view. Sanhedrin, 90*b*, Rabbi Meir. "The corn of wheat is entrusted *naked* to the earth, and comes again to life with a multitude of clothing: shall not the pious who are buried in their garments also rise clothed?" The account of the teaching of Bundahesh is somewhat conflicting. On the one hand it seems to express the view that the natural body is resuscitated or at least reorganised. "Whence does a body form again—and how does the resurrection occur? Aûharmazd answered, When by me corn was created—it grew again and returned with increase. When that which *was not* was thus produced, why is it not possible *to produce again that which*

both of living and dead must undergo a complete transformation. "We shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed...the dead will be raised incorruptible (*i.e.* with a spiritual body) and we shall be changed[1]."

In his second letter to the Corinthians and his letter to the Romans St Paul does not change his views much on the Parousia and the Judgment. The Parousia is still close at hand[2]. But from his words about the Judgment, it must be presumed that he expected the bad as well as the good to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ and God[3].

It is possible, however, that St Paul has altered his opinion about the resurrection and the spiritual body. Dr Charles thinks that the resurrection is the immediate sequel of the departure from this life. We would rather say that there is continuity between the natural and spiritual life, the earthly and the heavenly body. St Paul says, "If our earthly tabernacle be dissolved, we *have* a building from God...eternal in the heavens." This appears

was?" (Bundahesh, xxx; cp. Kennedy, *op. cit.* p. 241 n. and Söderblom, *La vie future*, pp. 226, 227). On the other hand it is asserted that "the risen body is not identical with that which lived in this world, but spiritualized" (Kennedy, p. 253; Söderblom, p. 264: Le corps ressuscité n'est pas identique à celui qui vivait dans ce monde).

[1] Cp. Bundahesh, xxx. 28. "The heaven of Aûharmazd takes up the body (kerp) as itself requires." This doctrine is very ancient. According to the Rigveda (x. 14, 8), the dead are bidden to "become united to a body, and clothed with a shining form." The Avesta also teaches that the soul of the pious, on entering Paradise, is clad with heavenly raiment (Kennedy, *op. cit.* p. 259); cp. Avesta, Yast xxii. 39, 40, "How do the souls of the dead, the Fravashis of the holy Ones, manifest themselves? Ahura Mazda answered: 'They manifest themselves from goodness of spirit and excellence of mind.'" This passage suggests rather the pure immortality of the soul.

[2] Rom. xiii. 11, 12; 2 Cor. i. 14.

[3] 2 Cor. v. 10; Rom. xiv. 10.

to mean that the spiritual body is continuous with the earthly body[1]. St Paul goes on to say that we want to put on a new body, if, by putting it on, we shall not be found naked. We do not want to put off the earthly body, but to put on the heavenly body, that mortality may be swallowed up by life[2]. The idea of existing as a bodiless, formless, spirit, in the intermediate state till the last day, was repellent to St Paul. Yet if our Lord passed into the intermediate state (Hades or Paradise), and only on the third day assumed his glorified or spiritual body, then his spiritual experiences are an earnest and forecast of our own[3].

In the epistles of the captivity, Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians, and the Pastoral Epistles, St Paul reiterates his conviction of the Parousia and the Judgment, and looks forward to a glorious destiny for all mankind.

The Lord is at hand[4]. St Paul adjures Timothy by the appearing of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead[5]. The Lord, the righteous Judge, will give a crown at that day to him and all those that have loved His appearing[6].

St Paul hopes for the reconciliation and consummation

[1] Kennedy (*op. cit.* p. 265) takes ἔχομεν as meaning, "we have (in prospect), there awaits us as a sure possession." But it is doubtful whether this meaning can be got out of the Greek.

[2] ἐπενδύσασθαι = to put on over, in addition. Did St Paul think that the heavenly body was put on over the earthly body, like a coat over some undergarment? The new body is the form in which the spirit expresses itself, but at the same time a gift from God.

[3] Whether our Lord's natural body was miraculously dissolved or transformed, He possessed a glorified or spiritual body at the Resurrection. We shall be changed into His glory (2 Cor. iii. 18). Rom. viii. 11 does not refer to resurrection, but to spiritual life in this world. θνητά = mortal, νεκρόν = spiritually dead (*v.* 10).

[4] Phil. iv. 6. [5] 2 Tim. iv. 1.

[6] 2 Tim. iv. 8.

of all creation in Christ[1]. And yet he affirms that no one guilty of mortal sins like adultery or covetousness shall inherit the kingdom of Christ and God. There is a strain of universalism in the 1st Epistle to Timothy, when he says that God is the Saviour of all men, especially of believers, or that He wills all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth[2].

But St Paul still believes in the resurrection and the spiritual body. Perhaps he refers to the Intermediate State when he speaks of our Lord going down to the lower parts of the earth, and he may have believed, like St Peter, that He preached to the spirits in Hades[3]. He wavers at times between the desire to remain in the flesh, and to depart and be with Christ[4]. But he expects that Jesus Christ will transform the body of our humiliation, so that it will be like the body of His glory[5]. Therefore he still believes that we shall have spiritual bodies at the last day. In one passage of the 2nd Epistle to Timothy he mentions certain heretics who teach a spiritual resurrection in the metaphorical sense of rising from the death of sin[6]. As has been said before, St Paul differs from contemporary Mithraism both in teaching the resurrection in a spiritual body, instead of the immortality of the soul, and in declaring that Christ is the judge, while this function of judgment is assigned to Mithra in Persian literature much later than the New Testament[7]. Again, while St Paul describes the heavenly glory of the righteous, and the

[1] Col. i. 19, 20; Eph. i. 10.
[2] 1 Tim. ii. 4, iv. 10; cp. 2 Pet. iii. 9.
[3] Eph. iv. 9, 10; cp. 1 Pet. iii. 19, iv. 6.
[4] Phil. i. 23; cp. 2 Cor. v. 8.
[5] Phil. iii. 21. [6] 2 Tim. ii. 18.
[7] Even in the Bundahesh Saoshyant exercises this function, not Mithra.

rejection or destruction of the wicked, the Mithraic mysteries, as far as we know, teach that heaven is the abode of the soul from which it comes and to which it returns, but the fate of the uninitiated is left indeterminate.

It remains now to discuss the last of the eschatological books, the Apocalypse of St John[1]. The symbolic imagery is drawn from older sources, but we are inclined to think that these sources are Jewish rather than Persian[2].

Let us examine some of the possible instances of Persian or Babylonian influence.

The Lamb, it is said, may be compared with the Ram in the Babylonian astrology, or the signs of the zodiac[3]. But even if a lamb may be identified with a ram, the connexion between the two symbols remains obscure. Nor is there any great similarity between the Lamb and the Bull of Mithra[4]. It would appear more probable that the Lamb-symbol has been taken from the prophecy of Isaiah, or from the ritual of the Passover[5].

Again, the seven lamps of fire, or the seven eyes of the Lamb, which are the seven Spirits of God, are compared with the seven Amesha Spentas (Holy Immortals) of Ahura Mazda[6]. Now the seven Amesha Spentas included

[1] 2 Peter may be later than the Apocalypse. It refers to the destruction of the world by fire and the establishment of a new heaven and a new earth, which correspond to Mazdean beliefs.

[2] Some scholars, like Gunkel and Jensen, have constructed a theory of Babylonian origin, but this is rather far-fetched.

[3] Rev. v. 6, 12, xiii. 8, xiv. 1, xxi. 9; cp. J. M. Robertson, *Pagan Christs*, p. 301. He refers to Bundahesh ii. 2.

[4] The nearest approach to this symbol is found in Enoch (xc. 38) where the Messiah is symbolized by a white bullock, and the elect by sheep. But this symbol does not seem to survive.

[5] Is. liii. 7. Still the Passover-lamb may have been also in the writer's mind.

[6] Rev. iv. 5, v. 6.

Ahura Mazda himself, and six other personified abstractions or Divine qualities, such as Vohu-manô (good thought), Asha Vahista (excellent holiness), Khshathra vairya (perfect sovereignty), Spenta Armaiti (divine piety), Haurvatât and Ameretât (health and immortality). Even if it can be proved that the seven Spirits are the seven archangels, and further that Jewish angelology was influenced by the Mazdean cosmology, the seven Spirits are distinct from God.

The eschatology of St John is very like that of St Paul, but it has certain new features. The Parousia, as before, is expected to take place in a short time[1]. But St John distinguishes between the First Resurrection and the Millennium, and the General Resurrection and Judgment.

At the first resurrection the martyrs rise and reign with Christ a thousand years[2]. According to eschatological doctrine, the six days of creation are equal to 6000 years, and these are followed by one day = 1000 years[3]. This period is conceived as necessary for the conquest and final destruction of the powers of evil[4].

Then follows the General Resurrection and Judgment. God and Christ are conjoined in judgment[5]. Both the good and the wicked are raised, and they are judged according to their works[6].

Again, the souls of the martyrs lie under the altar of

[1] Rev. xxii. 10, 12, 20.

[2] Rev. xx. 4; cp. Dan. vii. 18, and Secrets of Enoch, xxxii, xxxiii.

[3] Cp. 2 Pet. iii. 8. St Paul suggests the reign of Christ in 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25. Yet in Eph. i. 22 it would seem that this subjection of all things to Christ took place at the Ascension, according to St Paul's view.

[4] The conquest of the Dragon or Satan finds a parallel in Parsism, in which Angra Mainyu is defeated (Yast xix. 96).

[5] Rev. xx. 11, 12, xxii. 1.

[6] Rev. xx. 12, 13, xxii. 12; cp. 2 Cor. v. 10 and John v. 28, 29 (resurrection of good and wicked).

God, and receive white robes for a season[1]. Or, in other words, the departed that die in the Lord are blessed, and rest from their labours[2]. But the others do not live again till after the Millennium. The righteous are judged out of the book of life. Then Death and Hades give up the dead (apparently the wicked) that are in them. All who are not found in the book of life are cast into the lake of fire[3]. This passage is contrary to the doctrine of universalism, but it must be remembered that it was written at a time of fierce persecution, when enemies of the Christian faith and apostates would be regarded with the utmost loathing and abhorrence.

The judgment is followed by the final consummation of the righteous. There is a new heaven and a new earth[4], and the new Jerusalem descends from heaven[5]. There is no temple in the city, but the faithful enjoy the blessed vision of God[6].

[1] Rev. vi. 9, 11, vii. 14. [2] Rev. xiv. 12.
[3] Rev. xx. 15, xxi. 8. [4] Cp. 2 Pet. iii. 13.
[5] Rev. xxi. 2, 10. Apparently St John still expected the establishment of the Messianic kingdom on earth.
[6] Rev. xxii. 4; cp. 1 Cor. xiii. 12; 2 Cor. iii. 18.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

We have now examined the main doctrines of Christianity and Mithraism, and are enabled to form a fairly accurate estimate of their respective value and strength.

Their origins, as we have seen, were similar in one point, that both religions came from the East. But the central figure of each is really quite different in character and attributes[1].

Mithra is, from first to last, a nature-deity, and his attributes, as God of light and Mediator, are rooted in nature-myths. Christ has been revealed to the world as an historical person, who lived, worked, suffered, died, and rose again[2]. It is, at the least, a picturesque exaggeration to assert that Mithra was a suffering Saviour or that he rose again.

The sacrifice of the bull by Mithra represented the giving of life and vegetation by the sun to the earth. The sacrifice of Christ was the giving of His life on behalf of mankind and because of sin. There is no real parallel to this kind of salvation in the Mithraic mysteries.

There is only a superficial resemblance between the repeated lustrations of the Mithraic cult or the mystic banquet, and the two great Sacraments of the Christian Church. Whether the baptism of Mithra took the form

[1] Cumont, *Textes et Monuments*, p. 341.

[2] Loisy, *op. cit.* p. 343: Il manquait à leurs mythes de salut un point d'attache dans l'histoire.

of water or blood, whether the mystics partook of the Draona cakes, meat, and Haoma juice, or unleavened cakes and wine, the atmosphere and accompaniments of these rites are far different from the Christian Baptism and Eucharist.

Lastly, the mysteries of Mithra, so far as they were distinct from Mazdean doctrines, taught the immortality of the individual soul of the initiated. The Christian gospel promises eternal life in a spiritual body to all those who have believed in Christ, and, we venture to say, to all who in some future state may come to a knowledge of the truth. The descent of the soul in the mysteries presupposes its pre-existence, but though this theory is found in some of the Jewish apocryphal writings[1], and is suggested by Origen[2], it never became the orthodox doctrine of the Catholic Church.

Beyond this belief in the descent and ascent of the soul, it is doubtful whether the mysteries of Mithra possessed an eschatology properly so called, except, perhaps, the belief in a final slaughtering of the bull by Mithra or Saoshyant. Later on Mithra was represented as the judge, and some doctrine of heaven and hell was developed, but in comparison with the plain teaching of the New Testament all these hypotheses are exceedingly vague and indefinite.

What then were the causes of the strength and vitality of Mithraism? It was, in itself, a pure and manly religion. It encouraged a life of action, it inculcated a love of truth and righteousness, and by hard discipline it trained men for the fight against evil.

But its weakness was its narrow exclusiveness. By

[1] *E.g.* Wisdom viii. 20; Philo, *de Somno*, I. 22.
[2] Orig. *contra Cels.* I. 32.

practically excluding all women from an active part in the mysteries, it deprived itself of that section of the community which is most loyal and devoted to religion.

Christianity had all the virtues of Mithraism and a few more. It went further in teaching gentleness, kindness, love of one's neighbour and even of one's enemies. Such teaching has seldom been equalled and never surpassed, and derives all its force and charm from an historical personality, in whom it was perfectly expressed.

Another merit of Mithraism was its remarkable power of self-adaptation to environment. Whether it was propagated at Babylon, Tarsus, Commagene, or Rome, it assimilated itself with amazing facility to the religion of the country. Mithra, chameleon-like, became equal to Shamash, Mēn, Sabazius, Attis, Helios. In most cases he associated himself with the mother or virgin-goddess as son or lover. Yet, on the whole, it is true to say that "he had no amours; his conjunction with Anâhita and others was rather a mystical blending of sexes than a conjugal union[1]."

But this facility of self-adaptation was damaging to the moral reputation and integrity of Mithra. Mithraism was, above all others, a syncretistic religion. The most diverse and incongruous elements were mixed in its cosmic system. What, therefore, it gained in extension and many-sidedness, it lost in intensity and definiteness. It was bound then to succumb to a religion that would brook no rivals and would grant no concessions.

Christianity, it has been said, did not overthrow Mithraism; it transformed and absorbed it[2]. It would be more

[1] J. M. Robertson, *Pagan Christs*, p. 293.
[2] J. M. Robertson, *Mithraism* (*Religious Systems of the World*), pp. 206, 208.

true to say that Christianity attacked and annihilated its rival. If the Christian fathers accused the followers of Mithra of diabolic imitation of the Catholic faith, it is hardly conceivable that they would have plagiarized the Mithraic doctrines, and then accused their opponents of taking a leaf out of their book. This would be the height of folly or impudence.

But, it may be urged, was not Christianity guilty of the same vice of syncretism? For instance, were not the official adoption of Sunday and the observance of Christmas on December 25th, not to speak of many other Christian ceremonies, due to pagan influences[1]? In reply, it may be said that St Paul kept the first day of the week as a day of worship at Troas, and this observance is based on the record of the Evangelists that Christ rose on that day. The subsequent recognition of that day by the emperor Constantine or any other person, does not affect or alter those facts. No doubt some Christian theologians employed the dangerous *argumentum ad hominem* that their "Sun of righteousness" was as good as "Sol invictus" or Mithra, but, unless one holds that both beliefs are equally mythical, their arguments do not destroy the truth[2]. The misbeliefs and malpractices of later genera-

[1] Cumont, I. 230. Mithrakâna, originally kept on *October 2nd* (the day of Mihr, the month of Mihr), was transferred to December 25th. The 16th day of any month was sacred to Mithra, and Sunday was specially sacred.

[2] Melito, *περὶ λουτροῦ* (time of Marcus Aurelius). He calls the Saviour "Ηλιος ἀνατολῆς—*μόνος ἥλιος οὗτος ἀνέτειλεν ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ*. Treatise *de Solstitiis et Aequinoctiis* (fourth century, written by an Italian priest): Sed et dominus noster nascitur mense Decembri, VIII Kal. Januarias...Sed et Invicti natalem appellant. Quis autem tam invictus nisi dominus noster, qui mortem subactam devicit? vel quod dicant Solis esse natalem, ipse est Sol justitiae, de quo Malachias propheta dixit. Pseudo-John Chrysostom, *de nativ. Domini*, II. 1091C: hodie nobis Sol justitiae nascitur.

tions are a discredit to, but not a disproof of, the primitive faith.

Again, the date of Christmas was not fixed at December 25th till the middle of the fourth century. Till that time, apparently, the feasts of the Nativity and the Epiphany were combined[1]. The fact that December 25th is the time of the winter solstice would not prove that the Christian story was a version of the sun-myth, unless we were convinced on other grounds that the gospels were not of an historical character[2].

The most that can reasonably be proved is that Christianity took over some popular customs of heathen religions, and purified them from unworthy and idolatrous associations. This is the only sense in which Christianity can be said to be syncretistic. But neither the person of Christ nor Christian doctrines were in any way assimilated to pagan deities or beliefs. Loisy makes some acute and pertinent observations on the subject of religious syncretism[3].

Contr. St August. *Tract.* XXXIV. 2 (*in Johannem*): Non est dominus Sol factus sed per quem Sol factus est. St Leo, *Sermo* XXII *in nativ. Domini*, II. 6 (our festival): Non tam de nativitate Christi quam de novi, ut dicunt, solis ortu honorabilis videatur. Eusebius of Alexandria (*Or.* VI. περὶ ἀστρονομίας) accuses Christians of worshipping the sun: ἀλλὰ καὶ Χριστιανοὶ καὶ ἀφέντες τὴν πίστιν τοῖς αἱρετικοῖς συναναμίγνυνται.

[1] St Chrysostom, preaching on December 25th, 386 A.D. at Antioch, reminds his hearers that it was hardly ten years since, following the example of *the Western Church*, they had begun to observe Christmas as a separate festival from the Epiphany. How soon the Western Church kept the Nativity apart from the Epiphany, is not certain. Nor do we know when the Mithrakâna was transferred from October 2nd to December 25th (Mihrgân was the name of the 7th month of the solar year, and of the 16th day of any month).

[2] In most of the sun or vegetation-myths, the god would die and go to the underworld in the autumn or winter, and "rise again" or revive in the spring. The resemblance, therefore, to the Christian story is, at the most, only partial.

[3] Loisy, *Les mystères païens, etc.* p. 356: Si l'on veut traiter de

If we wish to treat as syncretistic a religion which has not developed apart from all influences foreign to the conditions of its first origins, there will be no religion which is not syncretistic. The spirit of syncretistic religions appears in the case of Isis who is adored under different names in all the pagan cults, in the fact that the pagans resorted to several initiations, and assumed the priestly functions of different cults. These theories as well as these practices were absolutely repugnant to Christianity.

It will now be convenient to revert to the three theories of comparative religion which were stated at the beginning of our enquiry, viz. the plagiaristic, the psychological, and the progressive.

The plagiaristic theory is the easiest to comprehend, but also, I venture to think, the most superficial. It is easy enough to observe accidental resemblances, but it requires careful study and thought to discover essential differences. By a similar process of reasoning, Napoleon may be proved to be Alexander redivivus, or a sun-myth, or anything else we like. This theory has been applied to Christianity and Mithraism in two opposite directions. Dupuis, starting from the idea that "Christianity is only a sect of the Mithraists," pushed to an absurdity the parallels between the two religions[1]. Sainte-Croix, on the other hand, argued that the Mithraists had borrowed from Christianity their common practices[2]. We have endeavoured to prove that there is no direct connexion between the two religions either in origin or development, but we do not wish to exclude the possibility of mutual influence.

syncrétiste une religion qui n'aura pas grandi en dehors de toute influence étrangère aux conditions de ses premières origines, il n'y aura pas de religion qui ne soit syncrétiste, etc.

[1] Dupuis, *Origine de tous les cultes*, vol. II. part II. p. 203.

[2] Sainte-Croix, *Mystères du paganisme*, II. 147. These are both quoted by Cumont.

Again the theory of plagiarism in religion leads logically to the conception of religion as universal mythology. Consistent and thorough-going critics of religion, like Mr J. M. Robertson, accept this view, and are able, by this means, to dissolve the historical elements of the Christian faith. It would not be relevant to our present enquiry to discuss all the arguments for the mythical view of the Gospel tradition, but we must content ourselves with saying that the case for the wholesale borrowing from Mithraism by Christianity is not, in our judgment, demonstrated. If the further question be asked, Why should ninety-nine religions be regarded as mythical, and only one as historical? we can only appeal to history and experience. Mithraism, as far as we know, was never claimed as historical: Christianity, like Buddhism and Mohammedanism, claims to have been founded by an historical personality.

The second theory, that is the psychological, is more plausible and attractive. The investigations of anthropologists, and the researches of scholars like Dr Frazer, have thrown a flood of light on the beliefs of primitive peoples and modern savages. The minds of all men, they say, work alike, and the same ideas are found in all corners of the globe. Therefore it is perfectly natural that such beliefs as those of incarnate gods, atoning sacrifices, resurrection and future life, should be entertained in a crude or refined form by all nations. But if these religious ideas have never corresponded and never will correspond to any reality, the whole mass of beliefs amounts to a cruel and colossal delusion. Granted that the resemblance between the beliefs of the savage and of the saint or philosopher is as close as it is represented to be, there must be some absolute standard of truth to which these ideas

will conform. The belief that the sun moves from east to west, or that it goes round the earth may be an illusion: but if there is no sun to which the earth is related in its movements, the whole phenomenon is a pure delusion. If the ideas of God and the soul do not correspond to any supersensible reality, there seems to be no logical reason why all moral and intellectual ideas should not be equally illusory and fallacious[1]. When the fundamental conceptions of the human mind are shown to be erroneous, it is hardly worth while to cling to a few superficial notions concerning knowledge or conduct. The only rational position is absolute scepticism.

The progressive theory is the only one that does justice to all the facts. It admits the similarities without denying originality of conception. It is ready to believe that all men think more or less alike, but not that their thoughts are all on the same level of truth and purity. We have accepted, with some caution and diffidence, the principle of progressive revelation and applied it to the Old Testament, and also to the New Testament, and early Church doctrine. But if religious teachers and thinkers are to do justice to, and derive full benefit from the science of comparative religion, they must extend this principle so as to cover the whole range of human thought. If we believe, like St John, that the Logos did enlighten every man, then all the great sages and teachers must have possessed some knowledge of the Divine will. The early Church fathers were quite convinced of that fact. Justin Martyr affirms that "those who lived with reason (λόγος)

[1] The argument that all these metaphysical ideas are due to self-suggestion would apply equally well to ethical notions. "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." Prof. Huxley was, I believe, inclined to take this view. But this is surely the bankruptcy of morality.

are Christians even if they were counted godless, such as Socrates, Heraclitus, and others like them[1]." This may sound a very bold saying, but surely it is true to the Gospel. Clement of Alexandria speaks even more emphatically of the value of Greek philosophy.

> It was a schoolmaster to the Greek world as the law was to the Hebrews to bring them to Christ. Philosophy therefore is a preparation, making ready the way for him who is being perfected by Christ.

He adds finely, "*The way then of truth is one*; but into it as into a never-failing river flow the streams from all sides[2]." St Paul, if he is correctly reported by St Luke, adopted the same attitude at times towards Greek religion. He tells the people of Lystra that "God left not himself without witness[3]," and declares to the Athenian philosophers that "God has made all nations of men that they should seek the Lord[4]." Both St Paul and the Church fathers do assume that the heathen have discovered some fragments of truth, and that they can obtain some natural knowledge of God. We could not otherwise reconcile with the justice and love of God the fact that millions have been allowed to perish in total ignorance of the truth. The admission of a partial revelation does not detract from the value of the full revelation, but rather enhances it as the crown and goal of the divinely inspired thoughts of men.

Again we are far from alleging that the religious beliefs of all nations and ages are of equal value. Our enquiry into the doctrines of Mithraism has shown that some belief in "the Incarnate Word," Sacrifice, Communion,

[1] Justin, *1st Apology*, XLVI. 3.
[2] Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromateis*, I. 5 (H. M. Gwatkin, *Selections from early Christian Writers*, p. 107).
[3] Acts xiv. 17. [4] Acts xvii. 24, 27.

and the Future Life was held by the votaries of Mithra. But it would be simple paltering with the truth to pretend that Mithraic and Christian teachings on these questions are more or less identical or even very similar. Mere similarity in language must not blind us to difference in thought. We know that even simple words like religion and faith do not bear the same meaning to all people. To one religion means pure delusion, to another pure devotion: to one faith means simple credulity, to another simple confidence.

Lastly, the progressive theory rests on the assumption that the Spirit of God has guided us, and will guide us into all truth. We ought to welcome and accept any fresh knowledge, which may come to us from scientists or students of comparative religion. Of course we are bound to examine carefully the facts which are put before us, and not jump to hasty conclusions, either that the alleged facts must be true, and therefore our previous beliefs are entirely erroneous, or that the new facts are destructive of our faith, and therefore must be suppressed at all costs. Theologians are sometimes supposed to be content with faith, while the scientists are concerned with truth. But all honest thinkers are seeking truth, though they may approach it from different points of view. None of us has yet attained to absolute truth: our apprehension of truth is relative to our capacity of understanding and earnestness in enquiry. Progress may not be inevitable, but it is absolutely necessary, if we are to get any nearer to the goal of our efforts. The evolution of thought cannot be self-stultifying: it cannot be the end of knowledge to discover that most, if not all, that we thought or believed that we knew is entirely false. Error may be, and often is, mixed with the truth, but great is truth, and it does

prevail. The aim of the study of comparative religion should be to distinguish between the temporary and the eternal, the accidental and the essential, the true and the false in all religions. Above all we trust the Spirit of truth, that He will guide us into all truth.

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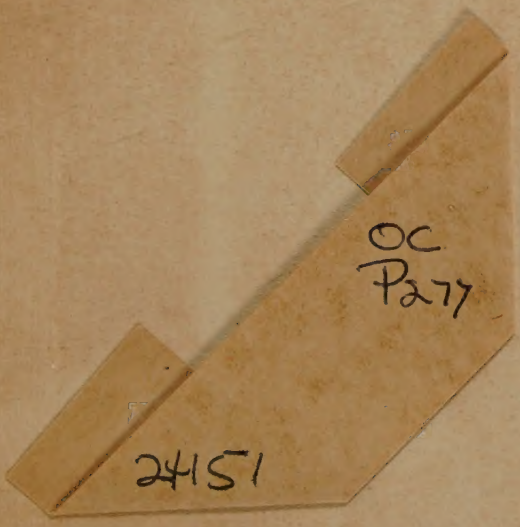

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